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LAWS OF CHRIST

FOR

COMMON LIFE

BY

R. W. DALE LL.D

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"*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.*"—John xiv. 21.

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I.

EVERY-DAY BUSINESS A DIVINE CALLING.

IT used to be common to speak of a man's trade, profession, or official employment, as his "calling." But I think that the word, in this sense, has almost dropped out of use, perhaps because it seems inappropriate and unmeaning. Its Latin equivalent has been rather more fortunate, and is still occasionally used to describe the higher forms of intellectual activity. It is sometimes said, for instance, of a thoughtful, scholarly man who is not very successful as a manufacturer, that he has missed his way, and that his true "vocation" was literature.

It is only when we are speaking of the most sacred or most heroic kinds of service, that we have the courage to recognise a Divine "call" as giving a man authority to undertake them. That a great religious reformer should think of himself as divinely "called" to deliver the Church from gross errors and superstitions, and lead it to a nobler righteousness, does not surprise us. It does not surprise us that a great patriot should believe himself "called" of God to redress the wrongs of his country. And among those who are impressed by the glorious and awful issues of the ministry of the Church, it is still common to insist on the necessity of a Divine "call" to the ministry.

It must add immeasurably to the dignity of a man's life, it must give him a sense of great security, if he seriously believes that his work has been given him by Divine appointment—that it is really his "calling." Take a conspicuous case—the case of the Apostle Paul. He described himself as an "apostle through the will of God," as "called to be an apostle." This meant that he had not taken up the great work of his life at his own impulse; it had been laid upon him by an authority which he could not resist. He had, therefore, no occasion for restless and anxious thought about his fitness for it. There was no reason for him to ask whether his knowledge of the gospel of Christ was sufficiently large and deep for so great a task, whether his moral and religious earnestness was sufficiently intense. He was vividly conscious of his weakness and imperfections, and it was a perpetual source of surprise to him that to such a man as himself the grace should have been given "to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." But God knew him better than he knew himself, and he was "called to be an apostle;" he was an apostle "through the will of God."

This relieved him from inquiries which would have diminished the force and vehemence with which he gave himself to his work. It was a motive for doing his best; for a work to which a man knows that God has appointed him, is likely to be done with courage, persistency, and vigour. It also enabled him to rely with perfect confidence on God's support. He was sure that all Divine forces were on his side.

Paul knew that his work, his "calling" in the old-fashioned sense of the word, came to him from God. But no Christian man can live a satisfactory life without a conviction of the same kind. This would be a dreary and an ignoble world if only an apostle could say that he was doing his work "through the will of God," or if only a minister or a missionary could say it. Mechanics, merchants, tradesmen, manufacturers, clerks, doctors, lawyers, artists—if we are to live a really Christian life, we must all be sure that whatever work we are doing, it is God's will that we should do it.

Do you ask how it is possible for what is called secular work to be done in this way? Let me ask you another question—How is it possible, if you are a Christian man, that you can do your secular work at all, unless you believe that it is God's will that you should do it? What right has any man to do anything unless he has a clear and serious conviction that God wants to have it done, and done by him?

It is convenient, no doubt, to distinguish what is commonly described as "secular" from what is commonly described as "religious." We all know what the distinction means. But the distinction must not be understood to imply that in religious work we are doing God's will, and that in secular work we are not doing it.

God Himself has done, and is always doing, a great deal of work that we must call secular; and this throws considerable light on the laws which should govern our own secular calling. He is the Creator of all things. He made the earth, and He made it broad enough for us to grow corn and grass on it, to build cities on it, with town halls, courts of justice, houses of parliament, schools, universities, literary institutes and galleries of art. It is impossible to use it all for churches and chapels, or for any other "consecrated" purpose. God made a great part of the world for common uses; but since the world, every acre, every square yard of it, belongs to Him, since He is the only Freeholder, we have no right to build anything on it that He does not want to have built.

He kindled the fires of the sun, and the sun gives us light, not only on Sundays when we go to church, but on common days, and we have no right to use the sunlight for any purpose for which God does not give it. God made the trees; but He made too many for the timber to be used only for buildings intended for religious worship. What did He make the rest for? It is His timber. He never parts with His property in it. When we buy it we do not buy it from God; we pay Him no money for it. All that we do is to pay money to our fellow-men that we may have the right to use it in God's service.

It is as secular a work to create a walnut-tree, and to provide soil and rain and warmth for its growth, as it is to make a walnut-wood table for a drawing-room out of it. It is as secular a work to create a cotton plant as to spin the cotton and to weave it. It is as secular a work to create iron, as to make the iron into railway-girders, into plates for steam-ships, into ploughs and harrows, nails, screws, and bedsteads. It is as secular a work to create the sun to give light in the daytime, as to make a lamp, or to build gas-works, or to manufacture gas, to give light at night. So that our secular work is just of the same kind as a great part of God's work. Lay a firm hold of this very obvious truth, and see how it affects every kind of secular business.

God made our bodies, and they are "curiously and wonderfully made." Whether they came suddenly into existence in obedience to a Divine command, or whether they were the last result of a long process of evolution, does not affect the fact that "it was He who made us, and not we ourselves." When God orders it that a rose-tree should be fed by the earth and the air, by the rain and the dew, and should be caressed by the sunlight and the south wind, till at last it crowns itself with a lovely flower—the flower being gradually evolved from the structure of the plant—that is to me quite as wonderful as if, by a word, He suddenly called a flower out of nothing. It is only the vulgar incapacity to recognise the mystery of familiar things which makes it less surprising and less Divine. These bodies, I say, God made. The architecture of the skeleton, the weaving of the tissues of the muscles, the distribution of the blood so as to feed every fibre, the quickening power of the lungs, the authority of the nerves which command motion, the sensitiveness of the nerves which are the instruments of perception, the structure of the eye and the faculty of vision, the structure of the ear and the faculty of hearing, the taste, the smell, the touch, the complex arrangements for articulate speech, are noble triumphs of God's creative power.

But our bodies will perish unless they are fed. Does God mean them to perish? He surely means them to be strong and healthy, and therefore He means them to have food. And a man may therefore say, "I am a farmer through the will of God, for I grow the wheat by which the body which God made is to be kept from starvation; God has made the seed, God has given wonderful qualities to the soil, God has provided the rain and the heat which are necessary for a harvest, God has arranged the order of the seasons; but all that God has done will come to nothing unless I plough the ground and clean it, and sow the seed, and send my reapers into the fields when the harvest is ripe. God takes me into partnership with Himself. He has done a great part of the work, He leaves me to do the rest. I am the servant of His infinite bounty. The ministers of the Church teach men to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread;' through me God answers the prayer. I am a farmer through the will of God." Another man takes up the work where the farmer leaves it; grinds the corn into flour, and so prepares it for the uses for which God created it. He may say, "I, too, am doing work which God wants to have done, I am a miller through the will of God." A third man takes up the work where the miller leaves it, makes the flour into bread—into just such bread as he thinks God means to give His children in answer to their prayer; he puts nothing unwholesome into it; he bakes it carefully; when he sells it he gives full weight. And he may say, as he puts his dough into his oven or draws it out, "I, too, am doing work which God wants to have done; I am a baker through the will of God."

The body must be clothed as well as fed, so that another man may say I am a cotton-spinner; and another, I am a cotton-weaver; and another, I am a cloth-weaver; and another, I am a tailor; and another, I am a dressmaker; and another, I am a bootmaker, "through the will of God." In this climate the body will perish if it is not sheltered from rain and snow and cold; so that a man may say, I am a brick-maker, a quarryman, a bricklayer, a stone-mason, a carpenter, a builder, "through the will of God." The products of remote countries must be brought to us across the sea, and men may therefore claim to be ship-builders, sailors, merchants, "through the will of God."

The products of remote parts of our own country must travel by road or canal, and the men who build locomotives, who make railways, the engine-drivers, the guards, the railway clerks, and all the railway officials, the men that build barges and the bargemen, the men that construct canals and that watch the locks, the carriers, and all the people they employ, may say that they are doing their work "through the will of God." And when all these have done their appointed service, it is necessary that the goods they have carried should be placed within reach of all the parts of every large town, and that persons should be engaged in distributing them; drapers, ironmongers, and retail tradesmen of every kind, may therefore justly claim to be the agents and ministers of the Divine bounty; from their hands men receive the finished articles of use and beauty which have been produced by a great organized army of the servants of God, out of materials which were originally created by God's own power.

Further, it is clear that God did not intend us to live alone. Human nature never reaches the height of its strength and perfection except in cities and nations. When great numbers of men are drawn together civil and criminal legislation becomes necessary; the peace must be kept, property secured, justice administered, liberty protected. And every minister and representative of the law, from the policeman to the judges and the Lord Chancellor, from the soldier in the ranks to the Commander-in-chief, may say that he is in his place and discharging the duties of his office "through the will of God."

Town councillors, members of parliament, ministers of the Crown, solicitors, barristers, may say the same.

God made the intellect of man as well as his body, and the intellect is wasted if it is not trained in schools and universities, if it is not quickened and developed by literature, science, and art. And so one man is a schoolmaster "through the will of God," and another a university professor, and another a lecturer on chemistry, and another an architect, and another a painter, and another a poet.[1]

If I think that my own work, as a minister of the Church, is the noblest and divinest, God forbid that I should ever give any man engaged in any legitimate occupation the impression that his work is not also noble and Divine. We are all serving God together.

It may be said that no farmer, builder, grocer, merchant, lawyer ever received a supernatural call to his especial occupation, such as Paul received to his apostleship; and that in secular life no man can be sure that he is doing the precise work which God meant him to do. But I suppose that the paths which were open to the great majority of men in their youth were few; they had a narrow choice. They used their best judgment, and took the line of life which seemed to promise best. Perhaps in their deliberation and ultimate choice they had no thought of the will of God. But now that they are committed to a particular trade or profession—if their occupation is a lawful one, if the work they are doing must be done by somebody—they may fairly assume that they ought to go on with it. The time has passed by for making a change. They made choice of their occupation by what they may call accident, and certainly without any conscious intention to do the will of God; but some work they must do if they are to serve God, and now there is no other work within their reach. So that, whatever may have been possible to them years ago, it is clear that it is God's will that they should remain where they are.

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[1] To illustrate the diversity and nobleness of the special work of women would require a separate paper.

The principle which should guide those young men and women to whom a choice is still open is very simple, though the application of it may often be very perplexing. Among the legitimate occupations which are accessible to them they ought to ask—in which of them they can use most effectively the powers which God has given them. Just now, indeed, a young man or a young woman may be grateful for any occupation offering the opportunity of serving others and getting an honest living. But when there is a choice the first question should be, not "Where can I earn most money with the least labour?" but "Where can I use my strength and faculty in the best way for the honour of God and the welfare of mankind?" The difference between those two questions involves the whole difference between serving God and serving Mammon—between eternal life and eternal death.

Take a strong case. A young man finds that he has a rare gift for scientific observation and discovery; his education has been generous, and he has the opportunity of living a life of research; but he is tempted to engage in business pursuits which offer him the certain prospect of a great fortune. If he yields to the temptation, it is clear that he makes the ignobler choice—a choice in flagrant antagonism to the laws of Christ. He was meant to be a prophet and a seer; he was divinely called to make more fully known to men the ways and thoughts of God as revealed in the material universe. Had he accepted his true mission, he would have augmented the knowledge of the race and augmented its power. He has taken a bribe from the devil to quench the light which God had kindled; he has chosen to serve himself rather than to glorify God and to bless mankind.

But that question about the choice of a business or profession is a large one, too large to be adequately discussed in a few paragraphs. I pass on to consider how the Christian conception of a man's secular calling will affect conduct.

You, my reader, are a manufacturer, lawyer, doctor, merchant, schoolmaster, clerk, carpenter, engineer, "through the will of God;" then, of course, there will be industry and integrity in the discharge of the duties of your calling. Your work has come to you by Divine appointment; you have to fill your place in a Divine scheme. Everything will be done as in the eye of God; of the work which God has assigned you, an account must, sooner or later, be given to Him. These generalities are sufficiently clear: look at what may be less obvious.

You are an employer of other men. The labour of ten, twenty, a hundred, perhaps five hundred families, is used and organized under your leadership. Their fortunes are largely in your hands. As long as you carry on your business successfully their strength and skill will have sufficient occupation and they will live in comfort. You are what Mr. Carlyle used to call "a captain of industry." You are *that*—"through the will of God." You have charge, within certain limits, of the well-being of your people as well as of your own; and for this trust you must answer to God from whom you received it.

The old and vulgar distinction between what are called the professions and ordinary trades was that in a profession a man has to place his duties to others first and his own interests second, and that in a trade he has a right to care only for his own interests and may leave other men to look after themselves. That was one reason why professions were regarded as honourable and trades as sordid and mean. And if the distinction were accepted, the scorn with which people in trade were once regarded would be deserved; for their life would be utterly base and ignoble. No intelligent Christian tradesman or manufacturer who has grasped the true idea of the law of Christ as it affects the secular order will consent that his life should be governed by so intolerable and unchristian a conception. The professional theory is the Christian theory.

A physician has no right to think of the peril to himself from going into a house where there is infection; the code of medical honour requires that at all risks he should use his skill in the service of those who send for him. A captain in the army has no right to think of his own life first; his men are in his charge, and the code of military honour requires that, at whatever risk to himself, he should hold them together and provide for their safety. The captain of a ship accepts the same lofty obligations. If when his vessel is on fire he jumps into a boat and pulls off, he incurs, and justly incurs, universal execration. There are innumerable stories of the cool gallantry with which sea-captains have stood on the deck in a rough sea, while the flames were making terrible headway, and have seen the women and children into the boats first, then the rest of the passengers, then the crew, and have saved themselves last of all, or, as has often happened, have gone down with the burning ship. That is required by the laws of professional honour.

This high temper, shown in other forms, will inspire a Christian man who believes that he is an employer of labour "through the will of God." He, too, as I have said, is a "captain,"—a "captain of industry."

He will think of the safety of his people before his own. He will acknowledge the universal law, that authority is given for service, that honour is conferred that we may defend and bless other men. He will remember that he is a master for the sake of his men. If he trades recklessly, if he consumes in luxurious expenditure the capital on which his people depend for employment, if he sinks it in wild speculations which promise immense returns but may very probably turn out disastrously; if he gambles, that is, with the money which political economists used to call "the wages fund," and which he holds in trust for men who look to their wages for bread; or if he neglects his business and works it badly so that it slips out of his hands, and if as the result of his carelessness the business breaks down, it is not he alone that suffers; the men he employs are thrown out, and anxiety, perhaps destitution, finds its way into all their homes. Moral evils are likely to follow closely on want of work and poverty. In our complex social life the responsibility of caring for others, not in the way of common charity and almsgiving, but in ways far more difficult, rises as we rise in the social hierarchy. All government is a form of service.

Those who are employed, if they are Christian men, and rightly understand the laws of the kingdom of heaven to which they belong, will show a corresponding spirit. I use the same language to men and to masters. You are a workman "through the will of God;" a servant "through the will of God." You employer ought to care for your interests, whether you care for his or not ; you ought to care for his interests, whether he cares for yours or not. A passionate, reckless pursuit, on either side, of immediate personal advantage is a clear violation of the laws of Christ: "Love thy neighbour as thyself;" "Seek ye first God's kingdom and His righteousness;" "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."

If these laws were universally obeyed, how greatly life would be sweetened! We should really look on all other men as brethren, and not merely call them so. We should think of them as comrades in a great army, fighting side by side under the high command of God against want, ignorance, disorder, and sin. This would create a mutual kindliness and a mutual respect which would bind together in golden chains all ranks and orders in the State. It would bring on the glorious years for which saints have prayed and toiled, and for which Christ died on the cross. It would be the fulfilment of the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." So far as any man accepts these laws and obeys them, his secular calling becomes as truly a perpetual service of God as the life of the angels who worship Him day and night without ceasing.

II.

THE SACREDNESS OF PROPERTY.

THE common phrase, "The Sacredness of Property," is a very noble and suggestive one. It reminds us that questions affecting property are not to be settled by custom, precedent, or the public convenience, by private contract or by public legislation, irrespective of Divine and eternal laws. If property is "sacred," God has something to do with it. Perhaps many of those who are in the habit of using the phrase in current political and social controversies have hardly measured its meaning.

What is meant by "the Sacredness of Property" becomes clear when we read the four Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ came to assert authority over the whole of human life. His claims are not met by merely reciting a Christian creed, and offering Christian worship; we must understand, accept, and obey His laws for the direction of conduct. But property has a very large place in human life; it never had a larger place than it has now. In civilized nations, property has its most convenient representative in money, and we are earning money, investing money, spending money, or using the things which money purchases, every day and all the day long. If Christ had not given us laws about property, He would have left a large part of our life free from His control.

He has said so much on this subject, that it would be difficult to compress even a summary of His teaching within the narrow limits of a paper like this. The doctrine of the apostles about property must be dismissed altogether, although there are some passages in the Epistles which express the Christian idea with extraordinary intensity and vividness. Perhaps the surest method of getting at the very heart of the matter will be to concentrate our attention on the two parables in which our Lord has developed His thought about it most fully: I mean the parable of the Unjust Steward, and the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, contained in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

The historical setting of these two parables is full of interest and instruction. The three parables in the previous chapter, the parable of the Lost Sheep, of the Lost Piece of Silver, and of the Prodigal Son, were all intended to justify our Lord's intercourse with publicans and sinners. It was an offence to the "Pharisees and Scribes" that Jesus of Nazareth, who assumed the position of a religious reformer, should have anything to do with the kind of people that now followed Him in great crowds, religious outcasts, women of bad character, men who had been excluded from the synagogues for their vices, or for their violation of what were regarded as important religious commandments. These three parables were part of our Lord's great polemic against the Pharisees; and in the second half of the parable of the Prodigal Son, in which He represents the elder brother as sullenly complaining of the reception which had been given to the younger man who had "wasted his substance in riotous living," our Lord holds up the Pharisees to execration and scorn.

He then turned to His disciples. The Pharisees complained, that by associating with "publicans and sinners" He was relaxing the obligations of religion and morality; and He therefore declared that His disciples were to strive for a nobler righteousness than the Pharisees themselves were contented with. It was true that He received sinners, but it was to make them saints, saints of a diviner type than the most religious of the men who were criticising Him. This teaching is contained in two parables; and both these parables illustrate Christ's theory of property.

In the first, our Lord speaks of a steward—an agent—who is accused of wasting his master's estate. The proofs of his guilt are flagrant, and he is certain to lose his position and his income. He calls together the men who are in debt to his lord, and tampers with their accounts, strikes off fifty per cent. from the debt of one, twenty per cent. from the debt of another, and by this piece of knavery he hopes to make friends who will give him shelter, at least for a time, when he is turned out of his office. His master discovered the fraud, but is represented as having no remedy. The steward has been his agent, and the steward's orders seem to have been valid. And his master recognises the forethought of his fraudulent servant; the man was an unscrupulous rogue, but he had had the art to look after his own interests. "The sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of light." Our Lord Himself tells the disciples to learn a lesson from the Unjust Steward. "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." Of course it is not the dishonesty of the steward that our Lord proposes as an example to the disciples, but the forethought. And *our* Master, to whom whatever property we possess belongs, will not charge us with robbing Him, if we use it in showing kindness to the poor, in relieving the sick, in teaching the ignorant, in recovering the fallen, that they may receive us at last "into the eternal tabernacles." What was a fresh fraud in the Unjust Steward will be in ourselves fidelity to our trust.

It is not probable that Zaccheus was in the crowd when this parable was spoken; but he might have heard of it; and whether he heard of it or not, his conduct was an excellent illustration of its meaning. His wealth was got badly; like the rest of his class, he had used his power dishonestly and oppressively When he repented and resolved to serve Christ, what was he to do with it? He determined to make himself "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness"—"Half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted of any man I restore fourfold."

Christ calls wealth "the mammon of unrighteousness," because it has had so much to do with human selfishness, dishonesty, and cruelty; because it is often so wickedly obtained and so wickedly used. By-and-by, when all men become Christ's loyal servants, and when His laws have real authority over secular life, material wealth will receive a nobler description; and the "Sacredness of Property," instead of being a phrase, will represent a most Divine reality.

But the complete interpretation of the parable is contained in these words:—"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Our Lord contrasts material wealth with wealth of another kind; to be faithful in the use of material wealth is to be faithful in the use of that which is of very little value; but fidelity in the inferior trust is a test of fidelity in greater matters. He says further that if we have not been faithful in using material wealth, we shall not receive from God real and enduring riches. Nor is this all:—material wealth is not really our own; we hold it for a time, but we shall have to give it up. If we have not been faithful in our use of what is not ours, we cannot expect that God will give us an inheritance that will be truly and for ever our own.

One great principle underlies these various representations of property. Our wealth—whatever its amount—is not ours but God's. The corn is His:—it grows on His earth; it is fed by His rain; it is ripened by His sun. The timber is His:—the forests from which we get it were created by His power. The iron and the coal are His:—He laid them up in the mines long before our race appeared in the world. All precious things, silver and gold, diamonds, gems and pearls are His. Wealth is placed in our hands to use it for God; it is not our own; we are stewards; and in our use of wealth we are required to be faithful to Him to whom it belongs. This, I say, is the root of Christ's thought. He begins by stripping us of everything, by denying our ownership in everything we possess. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

This is in harmony with the whole strain of the teaching of the New Testament. Paul describes us as the slaves of Christ. Not only does our property belong to Him; we ourselves belong to Him. We are His, without qualification and without reserve. Our bodies belong to Him, with the muscles which we use in physical labour; and our minds belong to Him, with the knowledge, the keenness of judgment, the tenacity of purpose, with which we conduct our business or discharge the duties of our profession. We are not our own; we are the slaves of Christ.

If we prefer the more honourable title of "children," we obtain no firmer hold of material wealth. Yes, we are children—children in our Father's house. But the house is His, and all that is in it is His. He feeds us and clothes us; but the food and the clothing are not ours but His.

It is the fundamental law of the kingdom of Christ, that when we acknowledge Him as our Prince and Saviour, we renounce our personal claim to all the things we used to call ours—to our money, our time, and our influence; we part with our property in ourselves, and this includes parting with our property in everything. It is just as imperative now as it ever was, that we should forsake all and follow Him. Do you say that this is a stern and tyrannical law, and that it makes life desolate and gloomy? No; it makes life free and blessed. It quenches passions which often consume the strength of men and shorten their days. If wealth is not ours, if it never can be, if when we think of it as ours we are thieves at heart, unjust stewards, making that our own which belongs to God, why should there be any hot pursuit of it? It is pleasant to have the use of wealth for a time, just as it is pleasant to stay in comfortable and luxurious quarters when we are travelling. But we ourselves are none the richer because for a day or two we are guests in a splendid hotel; and if we are travelling through a country which offers poor accommodation, and have to lodge for a few days or a few weeks in rude cottages or village inns, where the furniture is rough, and the walls are bare, and the sheets are coarse, and the table scantily furnished, we suffer only passing discomfort, we ourselves are no poorer; we shall soon be home again. And, perhaps, the parable may be carried a little farther:—we may be all the richer when we reach home at last, because we have spent little and fared badly on our journey.

It is pleasant, no doubt, to have command of money and of a great deal of money, but it is not ours, any more than the rents of the Duke of Sutherland or the Duke of Westminster belong to their agents. We may prefer to have the position of a steward who has the control and administration of a great estate, to the position of a manager who has the control and administration of a small business; the higher position brings with it an increase in the sources of personal comfort, and of some things which are much more valuable than the sources of personal comfort. But in either position the wealth which passes through our hands is not ours.

If it is our habit to take this view of wealth, the disposition to get it unjustly or unfairly will be checked. Other men are God's stewards as well as ourselves. When we are trying to get by unfair means what is in their hands, we are trying to get possession of property which is not theirs, which cannot become ours, but which is entrusted to them, not to us. It is the case of one agent trying to collect rents from an estate which is under the management of another agent of the same master.

This habit of regarding wealth relieves us of care as well as of a passion for money. We say that we are children in our Father's house, but how few of us have the spirit of children, the trustfulness, the light-heartedness, the freedom from anxiety and from fear of the future! I doubt whether the true "spirit of adoption" will come from dwelling exclusively, either on those large aspects of the Divine Fatherhood, which are among the principal topics of modern theology, or on those wonderful representations of the prerogatives of the sons of God in the apostolic epistles, which were the favourite subjects of meditation with the saints of former generations. The precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are a discipline of the spirit of sonship; in obeying the precepts the Divine Fatherhood will be discovered by us, and apart from obedience the discovery will be withheld. "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth. . . Be not anxious for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on . . . Behold the birds of the heaven . . . your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field . . . Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." If we keep these commandments it will be possible for the Spirit to bear witness "with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

The root of very much of the restlessness of heart by which we are perplexed, and which is not soothed by the most gentle and gracious revelations of the Divine love, is very obvious. We say that we are children in our Father's house, but we insist on being grown-up children, and we have private speculations of our own in cotton and iron and corn, in railways and ships. No wonder that we are vexed and wearied with anxiety and care. Not until we become children in spirit as well as in name, in practice as well as in title, and cease to hold any property of our own, will the true temper and blessedness of God's children become ours. When this renunciation has become complete, we shall offer with quite a new spirit and meaning the prayer which Christ taught His disciples, "Our Father which art in heaven, . . . Give us this day our daily bread." We shall think of the bread as His, though we may have worked for it; just as the corn which a son has helped his father to harvest is the father's, not his; just as the fruit which a child has picked for his father is the father's, not his. But when everything that once seemed ours passes out of our own possession and becomes God's property, we cease to be anxious about it, and we live a life of faith, a life of continual and happy trust in the infinite love of our Father in heaven.

Does this conception of the "Sacredness of Property" impoverish us, and leave us with a sense of miserable destitution? On the contrary, if we accept it frankly, we only part with our right to very poor and narrow possessions in order to enjoy illimitable wealth. We come to understand the great paradox which is so unintelligible until it is fulfilled in our own experience: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for My sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, *houses*, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and *lands*, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

I travel over the estate of a great proprietor; the land is covered with rich crops; every now and then I pass farm buildings well built and well kept; through the trees I see the castle in which the great proprietor is living. Perhaps by his courtesy I am permitted to go through the stately rooms, and I see costly furniture, noble sculpture, beautiful pictures, precious gems curiously worked, ivory, agate, malachite, and jade. Shall I envy him? Why should I? The things are not his any more than they are mine. They all belong to God. He is God's child and so am I. He is there only for a time, like the man who shows me over the house; and perhaps the man will live there longer than his master. The duke has the keeping of the pictures and the sculpture; I have the delight of seeing them. He has the responsibility of choosing and buying the ancient coins, the gems and the pottery; and perhaps he is sometimes worried because he is deceived about their value; I have only to admire them. His estates, stretching over two or three counties—perhaps they give him a joy inferior to the joy they give to me; perhaps they enrich his life less than they enrich mine. He receives the rents, but of all that the estate yields the rents are the least worth having. I may hear a song in his running streams that he never heard, and see a grace in his woods that he never saw; in my memory, for years after I have seen it, the heather on the hills may glow with a splendour of which he never caught a transient glimpse; and from the heights which rise above his home my thoughts may take wing to a heaven which he has never visited. Why should I envy him? Men call the estate his; but it is God's; and if God who loves me as well as He loves the duke, gives me a home for a few years under the smoky skies of a great manufacturing town, and sends the duke to a castle among the hills, it must be all well; and the fairest and most precious part of the duke's estate may be mine more truly than his.

It is necessary to lay a firm hold of this conception of property, if we are to make any right use of what our Lord says about the duty of charity and about making to ourselves friends who will receive us into "the eternal tabernacles.'

Charitable gifts are too often spoiled by that spirit of Pharisaism against which our Lord had to maintain so severe and incessant a polemic. Men have become accustomed to regard their property as in every sense their own. The Christian Church has permitted this unchristian heresy—a heresy as grave as any that was ever condemned by Council or Synod—to remain uncorrected and unrebuked. In appropriating a part of their property to the relief of the poor, to the development of the intellectual life of their country, and to other public ends, they have supposed that they were exhibiting an illustrious virtue and have plumed themselves on their magnificent generosity. But they were simply discharging a duty, using the property as its true Owner intended, showing fidelity to Him. It would be quite as reasonable for the trustees of a great educational endowment to claim credit for personal generosity because they appropriate the revenue of the trust to the maintenance of schools. The money is not theirs; they are bound to appropriate it according to the terms of their charter. And according to our Lord's conception of property, all property belongs to God; we are not owners but trustees. The purposes to which it is appropriated are not rigidly defined in any legal instrument; nor can the obligations of the trust be enforced by an appeal to any earthly court; but for the Christian man "the law of liberty" is as real a law as the law of the land, and it is defended by more awful sanctions.

We see the effect of our Lord's teaching, or of the the spirit of His teaching, in the action of the Pentecostal Church. I suppose that the members of that Church had very imperfect conceptions of what we call Christian Doctrine. They worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ as their Prince and Saviour; and they trusted in Him for the remission of sins, for access into the kingdom of God, for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and for the great gift of eternal life. But their creed was probably a very short one. They would have been very unsuccessful in defining the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of the New Birth. Their moral life, as a whole, was probably ruled by Jewish rather than by Christian law. Most of them—perhaps all of them—thought it necessary for men to submit to circumcision and to honour all the institutions of Judaism if they were to be saved. But either under the control of Christ's teaching, or more probably at the instinctive impulse of the new and wonderful life which they had received from Him, they obeyed some of Christ's laws which the Church of later ages has forgotten.

They looked at property as Christ looked at it. They believed in its "sacredness." They were all God's children; their property belonged to their Father and they were ready to share it with all that were in their Father's household: "Not one of them said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." There was no want among them: "For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto each according as any one had need." I do not believe that they established a system of communism. No man on submitting to baptism came under any engagement to surrender his property to the Church. Every man had a perfect right to retain as much of his property as he thought fit; if he chose he might retain it all. Nor was there any law requiring men to bring their weekly earnings and pay them into the Church account. But Christian men who had property held it with a light hand; looked upon it as a trust; and since many of their brethren were in great need they sold houses and lands to create a fund for their support.

This sudden and startling illustration of the spirit of the new Faith must have had an immense effect It was the visible sign that a new idea had come into the world of the relations between men and God, and between men themselves. It was a decisive proof that a Divine order was emerging, which was destined to transform the social condition of all nations. It was the gospel of the kingdom taught in picture-lessons, and the simplest mind could catch its meaning.

The circumstances of the Church in those great days were, however, wholly exceptional. There were large numbers of persons baptized on the Day of Pentecost who had travelled from distant countries to be present at the Jewish Festival, and who having discovered that the Christ for whose coming their fathers had been waiting so long had now come, remained in Jerusalem to learn all that the apostles could tell them about His Kingdom, about the new truths He had taught, about the new laws which were given to those who acknowledged His authority, and about the new hopes which were to be their solace and their strength. In the case of many of them probably, the funds which would have been sufficient for a shorter stay were exhausted long before they had the heart to return home. Some of the Christian men and women who lived in the city and its neighbourhood may have lost their ordinary employment by becoming disciples of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. Others may have been so excited by the new revelation which had come to them that they could not follow their trades. Nor were these the only reasons which made a common fund necessary. There was a most vivid sense of brotherhood among those who had passed together into the Kingdom of God; they were not satisfied with meeting together two or three times a week to talk about the great deliverance which God had wrought for His people, and to unite in worship and thanksgiving; they wanted to live together, and so they had common tables in many houses in Jerusalem, and for these provision was made at the common cost.

There have been times when many kindly enthusiasts have imagined that the true remedy for the physical miseries of mankind and for many of the worst moral evils which menace the stability of nations, is to be found in giving a complete organization to the spirit of the early Church, and making it the legal order of society. The inequalities of human condition are appalling—appalling in themselves, appalling in their effects on the intellectual, the moral, and the religious life of men. I do not wonder that great socialistic schemes should have filled the imagination and kindled the enthusiasm of many noble and generous souls. Such schemes have again and again during the last half-century, excited the hopes of a social millennium among the working people of the great cities of France. They have more recently touched the imagination of the working people of the great cities of Germany. In Russia there exist the foundations on which a system of Socialism might be built up, and many speculative Russians have believed that in the village communities of the empire they have the elements of a social order, which would solve the perplexing questions created by the physical sufferings and social discontent of the poorer classes in all the greater nations of Europe. Forty or fifty years ago projects of the same kind attracted some attention in England.

Whether the time will ever come when it will be safe on economical grounds to attempt a social organization, founded on communistic principles; whether such an organization would be friendly to industry, to personal independence, to originality of character; are questions into which it is unnecessary to enter. Monasticism is the only form under which a communistie scheme of life has achieved any considerable and enduring success; and as Monasticism involves celibacy, its success has no value in relation to our social troubles. A communistic social order had a brief existence in the early history of some of the American colonies. In Virginia the experiment was tried under conditions which prevented the possibility of success. In New Plymouth the conditions were exceptionally favourable, but there, too, the experiment was a failure.

The scheme of a community of goods requires a height of virtue to which as yet no considerable portion of the human race has ever attained. To give it a chance of success men must have a noble public spirit, must be free from personal ambition, must be willing to do disagreeable work for the sake of the work itself, and without the constraint of the relentless law—if any man will not work neither shall he eat. No cunningly contrived system of regulations, no ingenious organization of the varying forms of aptitude and faculty, will be of any avail unless all men are both heroes and saints. A revolution so immense as this in the social order, implies a revolution equally immense in human nature; nor is it rational to suppose that this change in human nature can be effected by any change in mere external institutions. If under our present social order those virtues could be created and disciplined which are necessary to the very existence of a communistic system, whatever is unjust and unequal in our present social life would soon disappear. The great problem after all is not, How can we improve our institutions? but, How can we improve men?

What concerns us in the present discussion is that the Lord Jesus Christ never suggests that private property should be abolished, but tells us to use it as God's stewards. A great German defined the difference between Socialism and Christianity in a very clever epigram:—"Socialism says, 'What is thine is mine'; Christianity says, 'What is mine is thine'; the difference is infinite." But the epigram needs correction. Christianity really teaches us to say, "What seems thine is not thine; what seems mine is not mine; whatever thou hast belongs to God, and whatever I have belongs to God; you and I must use what we have according to God's will."

The "Sacredness of Property" determines what uses of property are legitimate. God intends us, first of all, to provide for our own wants and the wants of our children and dependents. These wants vary with the circumstances of men, with their training, with their occupation, with the functions they have to discharge to society. Every man must form his own judgment as to what expenditure on himself and on his own house God will approve. He is God's servant, and may use his income in meeting whatever expenses are legitimately incurred in doing God's work. He may move from a modest house into a mansion, with greenhouses, vineries, stables, and a park, if his income is large enough to cover the increased expenditure, and if he thinks that by the change he will serve God more effectually. But to those who believe in the "Sacredness of Property," it is clearly unlawful to incur a large increase of personal expenditure without the prospect of securing any corresponding increase in the efficiency of their service. Every man whose income will cover more than the necessities of his own life and work, is also required to use part of it, how much he must judge for himself, in serving others. The form in which this service is to be rendered must be determined by a man's position, circumstances, and faculty. One man may be specially "called" to shelter the homeless, another to care for orphans, another to promote scientific discovery, another to contribute to the development of art or of literature, another to strengthen great movements for the social and political improvement of mankind. All Christian men will desire to have some share in relieving the common misfortunes of human life, and in making known the gospel of the Divine righteousness and love. The general law is clear and definite: our money is God's money, and we must spend it for nothing for which God does not want it spent.

And now I can imagine that some of my readers—practical, sagacious, religious men—will be ready to say that this theory of the "Sacredness of Property" is extremely visionary—the kind of theory likely to commend itself to an enthusiast unfamiliar with the business and affairs of the world, but absurdly useless for the guidance of conduct. That is exactly what the Pharisees thought about our Lord when they heard this theory of property from His lips. "The Pharisees who were lovers of money heard all these things; and they scoffed at Him."

And how did He answer their scoffing?

It was against the spirit which leads us to regard our property as our own—not God's—that the awful parable of the rich man and Lazarus was directed. The Pharisees scoffed at our Lord's "visionary" account of property; this parable is His reply. The intense and natural curiosity of men about the future life has led them to pass over the tremendous moral and practical lessons of the parable in their endeavour to discover what it reveals concerning the fate of the impenitent. But what was it that our Lord meant the parable to teach?

It is a parable about a rich man and a beggar. The rich man is not said to have been a bad man, in the current sense of the word. He was rich, but he may have got his wealth honestly. He was "clothed in purple and fine linen," but I suppose that he paid for them. He fared "sumptuously every day;" but for anything that is said in the parable, he was neither a glutton nor a drunkard. He was rich and he enjoyed his riches. That is all. He thought that his wealth was his own, to spend as he liked. It never occurred to him that it all belonged to God.

Lazarus, the beggar, was laid at the rich man's gate and was glad to get the broken meat which came from the rich man's table. On the sufferings and misery of Lazarus it is not necessary, for the immediate purpose of this paper, to say anything. He died and "was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom"—to a place of honour at the great festival of the blessed.

The rich man also died and was buried ; and after we are told of the rich man's death and burial there follow immediately these startling words : "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am in anguish in this flame."

Instead of discussing the questions which are suggested by this account of the rich man's doom, we shall do well to consider how he incurred it. The doom was terrible, and, apparently, without hope. There is no need to suppose that he was condemned to material flames, any more than there is need to suppose that Lazarus was literally reclining in Abraham's bosom. But whatever may be the nature of the suffering represented by the "torment" and the "flame," Christ means us to understand that the suffering is appalling, intolerable; and the "great gulf" seems to suggest that there is no escape from the fiery anguish to the happy seats of the saints.

Does any man dare to suggest that this parable is an illustration of the severity and mercilessness of the Christian conception of God? It is an illustration of precisely the opposite of *that.* We see here the indignation of Infinite Love at white heat. The "rich man" thought that his property was his own, and that he had a right to use it for the purposes of self-indulgence. He clothed himself in "purple and fine linen;" he kept a sumptuous table. He had no active, earnest pity for Lazarus who was lying at his gate or for hundreds of others as miserable as Lazarus. He never thought that since his property belonged to God he was guilty of a flagrant breach of trust in not using it for the relief of those whose sufferings touched the Divine heart and to whom he should have been the minister of the Divine pity. To God this was intolerable. The "flame" is the fiery displeasure which God feels at his selfishness; and to soothe the anguish which the consciousness of the Divine displeasure inflicts, no saint or angel will dip his finger in water and try to cross the tremendous gulf.

This awful menace needs nothing to heighten its terror. It is just as truly a part of the revelation which Christ has made to our race, as the gentlest words of His compassion for human sorrow, or the largest assurances of His eagerness to forgive human sin. It belongs, indeed, to the very substance of the Christian gospel, or, at least, it is the deep shadow cast by its intense and glorious splendour. For the divinest element of the gospel is the declaration that Christ came to make His very life our own. If His life has not become ours, His great purpose has failed, and He has not saved us.

But in those who have received the life of Christ, there will be the "mind" which is also in Him. His estimate of riches, of earthly honour, of all the pleasant things of this world, will be theirs. They will call nothing their own; they will hold everything as a trust from God.

III.

THE CHRISTIAN RULE OF JUSTICE.

BY some ancient moralists Justice was made to include all human virtues; the just man was he who discharged all moral obligations. Even piety was made a part of justice, and the impious man was said to be unjust to the gods. A similar use of the word is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. The just man of the Psalmists and Prophets is the man who keeps all divine laws; justice is another name for righteousness, and includes all kinds of moral and religious excellence. But it is both common and convenient to give the word a narrower application. When a man demands justice he demands his "rights;" and if we give him his rights the claims of justice are exhausted.

In some cases the obligations of justice are perfectly plain and definite. A man has a "right," for instance, to require that we should pay him in full all the money we owe him; we are, therefore, bound, not merely to pay him when we are able, but to take care that we are able to pay him. To indulge in a style of living which touches the very margin of our income is not only a violation of the obligations of prudence and self-interest, it is a violation of the obligations of justice, even though through a happy chance no unforeseen and inevitable expenditure lands us in difficulties which prevent us from paying our debts. We ought to leave a margin for misfortunes. To put another man's money into a risky speculation is itself an act of dishonesty, even though the venture may accidentally turn out well and we may be able to pay him all that we owe him. To be honest through a fortunate accident is not to be honest at all.

A man has a right to insist that we should fulfil the terms of a contract in the sense in which we knew that he understood them, the sense in which we intended or permitted him to understand them. This holds true whether the contract is for goods or for services. It affects master and workman, manufacturer and merchant, tradesman and customer. It is not enough that we fulfil the mere letter of the engagement. We are bound to supply the goods, or to render the services, or to pay the money, which we knew the other party to the contract expected when the contract was entered into. To plead that we have done everything that the law requires is nothing to the purpose. The man who is honest only so far as the law compels him to be honest is not an honest man.

These are simple cases. The "rights" on one side are exactly defined by law or by contract, and the obligations of justice on the other side are, therefore, equally definite. But there are many provinces of life in which the "rights" are incapable of precise definition, and in which, therefore, the obligations of justice are less certain. To tell us to "be just" is very often to afford very little practical guidance. We meet the precept with the answer—"Yes. I wish to be just; but what does justice require?" It may be true, as moralists teach us, that the rules of justice can "be laid down with a degree of accuracy of which moral precepts do not, in any other instance, admit";[1] but in practical life the instances are innumerable in which it is almost as impossible to define the claims of justice as it is to define the claims of charity.

The most important relations of life involve obligations and "rights" which cannot be determined either by public legislation or mutual agreement. What, for example, are the "rights" of a wife? What freedom can she claim on the grounds of mere justice, in the choice of her friends, in the employment of her time, in the expenditure of money? What is the extent, what are the limits, of the demands she can make on the time of her husband, on the sacrifice of his personal tastes, of his friendships, of his amusements? Until the "rights" on the side of the wife are determined, the obligations of justice on the side of the husband are unknown. They cannot be determined by law, all the claims which can be enforced by law may be satisfied and the wife may still suffer flagrant injury. Nor can all the "rights" and "obligations" of husband and wife be determined by mutual agreement. Marriage is no doubt founded on voluntary contract, but the conditions of the contract cannot be varied or relaxed at the pleasure of the contracting parties. As soon as a man and woman are married, duties and obligations arise from which neither of them can be released in virtue of a private and preliminary agreement between them. To use a convenient legal term, the relations between husband and wife are not relations of contract but of *status*, and any contract which professed to exempt either of them from the obligations created by the *status* would be immoral and void. Husband and wife have "rights" which they cannot surrender; they are under obligations which no contract can cancel.

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[1] Dugald Stewart's *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, p. 173.

It may be said that the relations between husband and wife involve mutual duties which cannot be defined in terms of justice; and that when either of them begins to insist on "rights" the ideal beauty of the relationship is lost. In a perfect marriage there is a frank and unreserved surrender of the life of each to the other. Love gives everything and claims nothing; and if anything were demanded and conceded as a matter of justice, the charm of the concession would be gone. All this is true. But love is sometimes blind in other senses than that in which the poets have said it. Genuine affection may, through ignorance, be guilty of grave injustice. There may be an inordinate and unconscious egotism and an iniquitous invasion of the "rights" of another even where there is passionate devotion. In a perfect marriage the wife will never think of her own claims, but the husband will never forget them; the husband will never assert his own "rights," but the wife will never encroach on them. Love will always be eager to give very much more than can be demanded by justice; but only an intelligent and ethically cultivated love will prevent either husband or wife from sometimes giving less. But to define the "rights" which justice must recognise and which love will desire to transcend is not always easy.

Or, take the relations between parent and child; how are we to measure their mutual claims? What are the "rights" of the parent? What are the "rights" of the child? In this case, of course, there can be no question of contract; and when the legal obligations on both sides have been met, some of the gravest difficulties which have embittered the relations of parents and children remain untouched. Within what limits and up to what age has a parent the "right" to exert any control over the religious preferences of a child? Has a Catholic father the "right" to forbid a boy of seventeen to attend Protestant worship or read Protestant books? Has a Protestant father the "right" to forbid a girl of twenty to attend mass or to correspond with a Catholic priest? Has the clever son of a prosperous merchant a "right" to a university education? Can he complain of injustice if he is sent from school into the counting-house? Has a rich man the "right" to leave fifty thousand pounds to one son and only twenty to another, and only ten to each of his daughters? Or is he under an obligation, as a matter of justice, to give each of his children an equal share of his property?

Brothers and sisters have their rights as against each other. So have friends. So have lovers. Old servants have their "rights" which a just master will not disregard. Generous masters have their "rights" which just servants will be careful to remember and to honour. But these "rights" are in many cases extremely indefinite. It is not so easy as the moralists have taught us to lay down the rules of justice with any degree of accuracy. A man may honestly desire to be just, but if he cannot exactly measure the "rights" of others he will be unable to determine when the obligations of justice are satisfied.

Christ has given us a rule which will save us from many difficulties. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." This is not a scientific definition of justice, but a practical rule of conduct. It is to be taken with those obvious qualifications which are always necessary in applying rules of this kind. It is the Christian form of the ethical law—Be just.

It will secure justice; it will generally secure something more. For we are usually keen in discovering our own rights, and sufficiently generous in estimating them. Christ tells us to estimate the rights of others as we estimate our own, and then to govern our conduct, not by the claims which we suppose that we have upon them, but by the claims which they have upon us. In estimating our duties to other men we are not merely to make due allowance for the "personal equation;" we are to give them the benefit of it. I do not say that this rule will enable us, without a great deal of patient thought, to find a solution for the perplexing problems of life; but in most cases it will enable us to discover our duty at once, and in the rest will put us in the way to discover it.

We like other men, not only to pay the money they owe us, but to pay it punctually and without being worried to pay it. If we put ourselves in the place of a retail tradesman with a large number of small outstanding accounts, we shall see at once that carelessness and irregularity in paying small debts may sometimes cause almost as much trouble and anxiety as not paying them at all: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." When we buy goods from other men we wish them to give us goods of the quality which they know we expect to receive, and we like good measure and full weight. When we engage their services we wish them to perform to the very best of their ability whatever services they have contracted to render. If they have charge of our property we wish them to avoid injuring it, and to take as much care of it as if it were their own. In all such matters Christ intends us to make what we know would be our own claims on others the rule of our conduct towards them.

The rule is admirably simple in relation to interests and duties of another kind. When we are ready to take up and to repeat a report to another man's disadvantage, we should ask whether we should like a similar report about ourselves to be believed and repeated on similar evidence. When we are on the point of condemning a man severely, and forming a hostile estimate of his general spirit and character, on the ground of words which we ourselves have heard him speak, or on the ground of some unworthy action which we know he has committed, we should ask whether we should think it just for other men to form a summary judgment of our own character for similar reasons, and without taking into account our general conduct. We should be equally prompt to challenge lighter censures. We call on a man—a friend—and he meets us coldly and without sympathy; we can see clearly enough that he is glad when we leave him. But are we to feel resentment and to say that his friendship is fickle, and that he has no real kindness for us? Does it never happen that people for whom we have a genuine affection come to us when we are so absorbed in speculations or inquiries which detach us for the time from all the affairs and relationships

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of our common life, or when we are so completely mastered by anxieties about our own concerns or the concerns of persons dependent on us, that we receive them almost as if they were strangers—are unable to find our way to them, speak to them as if we had no interests in common, and dismiss them with a sense of relief? We call on a stranger, and he hurries us off with indecent haste. He is guilty of a fault; but are we to go about the world saying that he is brutally discourteous? Does it never happen that strangers call on *us* when our strength is almost exhausted, and when what strength we have is hardly equal to inevitable work; when there are letters to be written which there is hardly time to write; when practical questions of great difficulty and of great importance to ourselves or other people are pressing for settlement, and every moment we can command for thinking about them is precious? And at such times have we not, in our weariness and impatience, shown scant courtesy to people for whom in more fortunate hours we should gladly have killed the fatted calf? Do none of us speak rudely, and even with irritation, to most innocent persons when we have just heard that we have made a bad debt, or after a sleepless night, through which we have been tormented with neuralgia, or when we are fighting hard with the miserable depression caused by a bad liver? I am not excusing offences committed in such circumstances; I condemn them. But should we think it fair for other people to form an adverse judgment of our general character on the ground of these occasional transgressions? If not, let us remember the words of Christ: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." Be just.

There is a very common mistake about the meaning of the precept. It is sometimes taken as though it required us to rule our conduct towards other men by their wishes; to do this would often be a folly and a sin. It really requires us to rule our conduct towards others by what our wishes would be if we were in their place; and this is a very different matter. In other words, we are to make what we see are their real interests our own. I have heard of a foolish father who, when one of his girls was fourteen or fifteen years old, gave her the choice of a pony or of remaining another year or two at school. The child naturally elected to have the pony, and most children of her age would do the same. The father's conduct was ruled by the child's wishes, and he inflicted on her a grave injustice. From what I remember of him I believe that he knew no better. A sensible father will not always act according to the wishes of his children, but will consider how those wishes would be modified and corrected if the children had a larger knowledge and a larger experience of human life. No wise man would wish to enjoy temporary pleasure at the cost of lasting injury. We are unjust to our children if we do not give them the benefit of our wisdom as well as of our love. And we are unjust if we do not, in applying this rule of conduct, give to other men who may be excited by passion, by hope, or by fear, the benefit of our calmer judgment; and if we do not in all cases guide our conduct towards them by what we may be sure is our clearer perception of their true interest, even when this requires us to act in direct opposition to their most earnest wishes.

This rule may sometimes restrain us from acts of mischievous good-nature; it may sometimes even nerve us to a stern severity. A man applies to me for a testimonial, and I may have reason to believe that if I give it him he will have a good chance of securing an excellent appointment. He is in urgent need of it, for he is in a great deal of trouble. There is no harm in him, and I should be glad to help him. But I am doubtful, and more than doubtful, whether he would discharge the duties of the position satisfactorily. He says that if I were in his position and he in mine I should plead hard for his recommendation. But I have to think not only of the man himself, but of the people to whom he wishes me to recommend him. If I had to make the appointment myself should I like them to recommend me a man about whose fitness they were uncertain? Should I like them to tell me of his merits and not even to hint at his disqualifications? Is it just even to the applicant himself to give him the support he asks for? If I were in his position should I—if I were a wise and honest man—wish to be recommended to a post the duties of which I was unable to discharge? Apart altogether from the obligations of veracity, this "golden rule" may require me to refuse to support his application. The Christian law would diminish the immorality of testimonials.

Or I may happen to detect a man in some criminal act. I may discover that he is an old offender. All the evidence may be in my hands, and by using it I shall send him into penal servitude. The impulses of compassion make me shrink from prosecuting him. The man himself attempts to turn me aside by appealing to the precept, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." If I were in his case and he in mine, should I not passionately appeal for mercy? Yes; but this does not decide the question. This very law may compel me to prosecute. I have to think not merely of the individual man, but of those whom he will wrong if his criminal course is not arrested. I have to think of the community whose interests I happen to be in a position to protect from unknown, unmeasured injury. While the man is at large and unpunished I cannot tell who may receive harm. If another man were in my place I should wish him to prosecute; and if I am to serve others as I wish them to serve me I must send the criminal to gaol. The claims of the innocent are stronger than the claims of the guilty; and even for the guilty man himself a prison, with all its hardening influences, may be safer and better than freedom to repeat his crimes.

The "golden rule" is a guarantee of justice. Justice without generosity is cold and unlovely, but men who are conscious of being generous must not suppose that for them the rule has no practical value. I have known people who could be nobly generous, not in money merely, but in things far more precious—in affection, in sympathy, in appreciation of the work and character of their friends, in the unsparing devotion of time and thought and labour to the service of those who attracted their interest, touched their pity, commanded their confidence. And yet they could be guilty of atrocious injustice. For the most part men of this sort have an inordinate sense of their own importance; they carry themselves as though they were born in the purple. There is a certain regal manner in their admiration of the powers and services and virtues of others. They bestow their honours with a royal liberality and grace. But it never seems to occur to them that those to whom it is their delight to be generous have any "rights" which mere justice obliges them to acknowledge. They are Cæsars in their way—not constitutional sovereigns; absolute monarchs under no "obligations" to any man. Like Herod they will swear to give half their kingdom to any one that pleases them, and they will keep their oath; but like Ahab they will take Naboth's vineyard if they happen to fancy it, and will take it without scruple: no Jezebel is necessary to urge them to do it. To make men of this kind sensible of the fatal defects in their moral life is a very difficult matter. They think they are rich in works of supererogation, that they have "merit" to spare for the commonalty of mankind. They are the very Pharisees of morality; they do so much more than justice requires that it is impossible to persuade them that they do less. They regard themselves with unqualified moral complacency. There is a delight, an exhilaration, in speaking generous words and doing generous deeds to which the man who is merely just is a stranger. When we have given a ten-pound note, which we can hardly spare, to an old schoolfellow who has got into trouble, our hearts are flooded with a certain noble satisfaction. There is no such after-glow when we have merely paid our baker's bill. It is much more pleasant to be generous than to be just; but it is much more necessary to be just than to be generous.

The Christian Revelation is a discipline of justice as well as of charity. Men become unjust through their covetousness; Christ has told us that the wealth which we call ours is not ours but God's, and has taught us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Men are unjust through their ambition; they trample on the rights of others in their passionate desire for rank and reputation; Christ quenches the feverish thirst for earthly fame by revealing to us the possibility of winning the Divine honour.

Men are unjust under the pressure of anxiety and misfortune; in trying to save themselves from calamity and loss they are reckless of the wrongs they inflict on others; Christ has made the surprising discovery that we can rely on God's sympathy, defence, and help, through all the chances and changes of this uncertain life, and has encouraged us to cast all our care on Him. Men are often unjust because they form the habit of supposing that if they respect the rights and meet the claims which are protected and enforced by law they have done all that in strict justice can be required of them: Christ has warned us that there is a judgment to come, and that when this life is over we shall be judged by a law more searching and more equitable, and sustained by more terrible sanctions, than any that human tribunals can administer.

Above all, Christ has revealed the august greatness of every man—however obscure may be his earthly position, and however helpless he may be to vindicate his personal rights. We wrong men because we have not sufficient reverence for them. This is the root of all injustice. Brigands who will plunder a palace will leave the unguarded treasures of a temple untouched; their superstitious reverence for the gods restrains them from sacrilege. Men who will treat a peasant with reckless and insulting cruelty will treat even a fallen prince with the most tender courtesy. To those who really believe all that Christ has revealed of the present relations of every man to God and the infinite possibilities of righteousness, wisdom, power and blessedness, which are the inheritance of every man in Christ, every man will be invested with an awful greatness which will make an invasion of his rights an act of irreverence and profanity. Perfect justice is the fruit of a profound sense of the greatness and sanctity of human nature.

IV.

THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

SOME Christian people who are very zealous in protesting against the possibility of moral perfection in this life are always greatly astonished if a man, who professes loyalty to Christ, treats them unjustly or ungenerously. They believe that as long as we are in this world the most saintly men will at times sin against God; but when a man who attends public worship every Sunday, who is a regular communicant, and subscribes largely to a missionary society, sins against themselves, they conclude at once that he is nothing better than a hypocrite. That seems a very curious and almost unintelligible state of mind; so curious and so unintelligible as to deserve consideration.

That a sincerely Christian man should sometimes have hard and bitter thoughts of God—so these persons think—is inevitable; it is to be expected. God knows the infirmity of human nature, and will forgive the sin. But that a man with any real religious earnestness, with any genuine sympathy with the spirit of Christ, should have hard and bitter thoughts of *them*, is quite inconceivable. That a man with real Christian faith in him should sometimes be ungrateful to God for His infinite goodness does not surprise them: in every one of us there will always remain something of what is commonly described as our native sinfulness; and God can see that, with occasional ingratitude, there may be a fervent sense of His love. But that a man should be ungrateful to *them*, is a proof of total depravity and unregeneracy. That a good man's love for God should sometimes become cold they suppose is a matter of course; that he should sometimes find it hard to speak to God is also a matter of course; but that he should vary in the warmth of his affection for themselves, and should sometimes be almost discourteous to them, is what they cannot understand, and when it happens they are indignant, and begin to doubt whether there is any goodness in him. That a man who has sincere loyalty to Christ should sometimes be so swayed by self-interest, by vanity, by ambition, or by sharp temptation, to sin of other kinds, that his loyalty is for a time shaken and overcome, is among the necessary incidents of mortal weakness and imperfection. The persons of whom I am thinking believe that these occasional moral defects will happen to those who, through many years, have been trying to do the will of God, as well as to those who have only recently begun to live a religious life. When any religious man tells them that to the best of his knowledge the power of God is keeping him from all such offences, they are incredulous; they think that he is deceiving himself, that he is self-righteous. I do not say that they are wrong; but what perplexes me is this—if a religious man who makes no such profession is so swayed by self-interest as to injure *them*, if his ambition or his vanity leads him to commit a wrong against *them*, if, in a moment of irritation or when he happens to be in a sullen or a cynical mood, he speaks to them harshly, contemptuously, or ungenerously, they wonder that he should have the audacity to pretend to any religious earnestness at all.

It is very curious, and, as I have said, it is not quite intelligible. But I have not been sketching from imagination. The picture might be described as a "portrait"; but it is a portrait under which a great many names might be written. It is no caricature. There is no artistic merit in it, but it has the fidelity of a photograph. Even those of us who have been taught better may see in some of the features more than a faint resemblance to our own. Many Christian men have given a new turn to an old text. In their own private "Revised Version" of the New Testament they read: "Whosoever speaketh a word or committeth a wrong against God, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh a word or committeth a wrong against *me*, it shall not be forgiven him;—certainly not in this world, even if it is forgiven in the world to come." Christian perfection in a man's direct relations to God is supposed to be beyond the reach, in this life, even of those whose hearts have been set upon it for many years. Christian perfection in a man's relations to his fellow-men is supposed to be so easy that we have a right to expect it of every man, woman, and child that professes Christain faith.

Christ has taught us a different lesson. He has not only insisted on the duty of forgiving the offences of men in general, and warned us that if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our Father forgive our trespasses; He has insisted on the specific duty of forgiving the offences of our Christian brethren. He has warned us that our Christian "brother" will sometimes show an unbrotherly spirit, say unbrotherly words, commit unbrotherly acts. He has given us very explicit directions as to what we are to do when this happens; and the spirit of these directions should determine our conduct, not only to any Christian brother that has wronged us, but to every man from whom, as we think, we have received an injury.

If a man commits an offence against us—misrepresents us, insults us, injures us in any way—what are we to do?

Brood over it? This is what some Christian people nearly always do. They will tell you months afterwards, years afterwards, that they have never said a word about it, either to the offender himself or to any one else, for fear of making mischief. But they have been brooding over it—I might say they have been sulking over it—all the time.

It is wonderful what care some good people take to get all the pain and suffering out of an offence they can. A grain of sand blows into their eye, slips under their eyelid, and they keep it there till the whole eye is inflamed; they rub it with their finger till the torture becomes unbearable. They might have brushed it away at once, and have done with it; but no! The hasty, bitter word, the selfish act, of which a relative, a friend, an acquaintance was guilty, they lay up in their memory; and they will not forget it, whatever else they forget. About the many kindly things he has done, and the many kindly words he has said, they never think; but the one offence is always present to them. The good seed of the kingdom may fall on the path, and be picked up the next moment by a passing bird; or it may fall on rocky ground, spring up at once, and when the sun gets hot be scorched and wither away; or it may fall among thorns, and its growth may be choked; but the unbrotherly word which they are told that their brother has spoken, the unjust deed which they suppose he has done, takes root. It may be a very small matter, "the least of all seeds;" but they give it plenty of soil, plenty of moisture, and the warmth of excited feeling. It grows up and becomes a great tree, and birds of evil omen lodge in the branches of it. By-and-by, if it turns out that they had been misinformed, and that the hard word had never been uttered, the wrong deed never been done—or if the offender expresses his sorrow for the offence, and makes ample atonement for it—there is a great deal of trouble in rooting up the unwholesome growth, and for a long time afterwards there is an ugly place in the ground from which it has been torn. If a man injures you, do not brood over it.

Nor must you talk about it to everybody you meet It is bad enough that by a wrong word, a wrong act, ill-feeling has been created between you and the offender; you make the matter worse if you create similar ill-feeling between him and other people. What is your motive for speaking about the injury? Do you want to get your friends to take sides with you against the offender? You ought to want to make the offender himself take sides with you against the offence. The more people know of the wrong, and the stronger the feeling you create against the wrong-doer, the harder you make it for him to acknowledge his fault. The story will grow; the man's friends will resent the exaggerated account of the offence, which will soon be current; the man himself will begin to complain of injustice; and, instead of repentance on his part, and the restoration of kindly confidence between him and you, there will be alienation between more hearts than you can number. When any one comes to us with a story against another, we ought, as a rule, to ask him whether he has spoken to the man who committed the wrong. If he has not, we are bound to tell him that, in speaking about the matter to any one else before speaking to the offender, he has broken the letter, and has probably violated the spirit of one of Christ's precepts.

"If thy brother sin, rebuke him;" this is Christ's law. Rebuke him, and do it face to face. Do not send him an anonymous letter; this would be intolerably mean and base and cowardly. To write a letter with your name to it would, no doubt, be very much better; but there is often—not always—a touch of cowardice even in *that;* and a letter is not half so likely to be effective as a frank and direct appeal. We are not, all of us, perfect masters of the English language. It is a very difficult instrument to handle. In a letter, no matter how careful we may be in writing it, we are almost sure to say either less or more than we mean. The letter has to be read as well as written, and however admirably we have written it, it may be read badly. Words take their meaning from the temper of the man to whom they are spoken. It is hardly possible to write to a man who has injured us without conveying impressions which we never intended to convey. We cannot modify our complaint according to the manner in which it is received. We cannot give explanations which may be necessary to correct misapprehension. Go and speak to the man who has wronged you, and then there will be a chance of getting the difficulty adjusted.

Of course, our Lord did not mean that for every trifling offence we are to go and rebuke the offender. There are innumerable cases in which a wise and generous man will clear his mind at once of the momentary sense of injury—will forgive and forget it. If we only *hear* that something untrue or unfair has been said about us we shall generally be right in concluding that the report is false. I find that the safe thing is to believe all the kind things that other men are reported to have said about me, and hardly ever to believe the unkind things. This is a pleasant rule as well as a safe one. Why should we be ready to think that people are always speaking against us? If we are conscious of not deserving to have the hard words said about us which reach us on currents of idle gossip, we ought to suppose it very improbable that good men who really know us were guilty of saying them. As for strangers, they often speak, not against us, but against some dismal *simulacrum* of us—a mere phantasm created by imagination and rumour—which they have mistaken for us; and though the mistake may have its inconveniences, there is no reason for being hot and indignant about it. A quiet, honest man may sometimes see in his newspaper at breakfast-time that some scoundrel having real flesh and blood, of the same name as himself, has been brought up before the magistrates for burglary. He does not fume, and fret, and get angry with the witnesses because they say such hard things against the man that happens to bear his name. He does not denounce the magistrate for committing him. He knows that the witnesses said nothing against himself and that the magistrates have done him no wrong. It was another man that was concerned in the affair, not he. And some reports that reach us of what has been said about us ought to be received with the same equanimity. What was said did not refer to *us*, but to that *simulacrum* of us which I spoke about just now, and which happens to bear our name.

As for the injuries which people who know us have committed against us, half of them may be excused at once. Unfair words are spoken in haste; unkind acts are done through mere awkwardness when there is no real unkindness in the heart. One man is shy; another man is absent; a third is slow of speech; a fourth is a little stupid; a fifth has a quick, sharp way with him that means nothing; a sixth has a very bad memory; a seventh has very loose notions about the meaning of words. Men of these various descriptions say things which they ought not to say, or omit to say things which they ought to say, or they say things in a way in which they ought not to say them; but a very slight measure of intelligence and of Christian charity will enable us to see that they had no intention to wrong us. Nine out of ten of the offences of which we might be disposed to complain should be dismissed from our minds at once, and should not cast even a passing shadow upon the confidence and affection with which we ought to regard the innocent offenders. They intended no harm; we should feel no resentment.

But when there is a wrong that we cannot dismiss in this way, we are to go to the wrong-doer and we are to tell him his fault. In a well-known passage our Lord says that, at least in the first instance, we are to go to him alone, "If he hear thee thou hast gained thy brother." It is with this gracious hope that we are to go to the offender. To *lose* a brother is an immeasurable loss; to avert the calamity "go, show him his fault between thee and him alone."

Just at this point we may discover, perhaps to our astonishment and vexation, that we have very little to say to him—that we have only to complain that he has offended our vanity, our pride, our sense of self-importance, our ambition; or we may find that all the trouble has arisen because his selfishness has come into collision with ours; or we may see that our anger is out of all proportion to the magnitude of the offence, and that while we might charge our friend with doing a slight wrong, he might charge us with feeling most extravagant and unjust resentment. We shall then have no choice but to fight it out alone with our ill-temper, our selfishness, our vanity, our pride; and we shall endeavour to turn the indignation which we had felt against our brother against our own folly and sin.

But if we still feel that we have reason to complain, if we are sure that there is a real offence, and an offence so grave that it must be acknowledged, and acknowledged with regret, before there can be perfect reconciliation to the offender, we shall go to him and "rebuke" him.

If the offender is our Christian "brother" we shall remember it while we remonstrate with him; we shall remember that his offence against us cannot be half so grave as the offences which both he and we have committed against God, and for which, as we trust, God has forgiven both of us for Christ's sake. We shall take it for granted that he wants to do right—that if he does not see his fault at once it may be partly through our inability to make it plain to him—that if he does not acknowledge it at once it may be partly through some defect in our own spirit and temper that makes it hard for him to humble himself. We shall think less about our personal injury than about the sin of which he has been guilty; and yet, remembering our own sins, we shall not think—or allow him to suppose that we think—that his solitary offence has destroyed the proofs which he had given of his loyalty to Christ. We shall speak frankly and firmly, but gently, with a deep reverence for the dignity that belongs to him as a son of God and an heir of immortal righteousness and glory. We shall not speak wildly at the impulse of personal resentment, but with an earnest longing to preserve or to restore the mutual trustfulness which ought to unite those who belong to the household of faith.

But we shall not be indifferent to reconciliation, though we may have reason to fear that the offender is wholly insensible to the authority and love of God. The Church has an exceptional sacredness, for it is the visible revelation of an invisible and eternal kingdom ; but the secular order of society is also Divine. We belong to both, and Christ is supreme in both. In our ethical relations to those who do not share our august faith and our infinite hopes, the law of Christ and the spirit of Christ are, therefore, to be the rule of our conduct.

There are special reasons, no doubt, why we should spare no effort to live in mutual affection and good-will with those who, like ourselves, are loyal to Christ ; but there are special reasons of another kind for being equally earnest in removing every cause of alienation between ourselves and any relative, friend, or neighbour who has no Christian faith. If such a man has treated us unjustly, and we are able to bring the injustice home to him, this may awaken his conscience and lead to the great discovery of his sins against God. His acknowledgment of the offence he has committed against ourselves, and his sorrow for it, may be the beginning of a graver confession and a deeper penitence. When he sees that our brotherly affection has made us anxious for reconciliation, and that our moral resentment against the wrong he has done us has no bitterness in it, and is something very different from revenge, he may find in our imperfect exemplification of the spirit of Christ something to make more clear to him that blending of infinite righteousness with infinite love which is revealed in the Christian Gospel.

But suppose that we ourselves have been guilty of the offence, and our brother has come to "rebuke" us, what is our duty?

It is not a pleasant thing to be told that we have committed an act of injustice; but when we have committed it, and the man we have wronged comes to remonstrate with us, we ought to receive him courteously. To treat him roughly is to add to the original offence. We ought to have saved him the pain of coming at all; we ought to have made voluntarily all the reparation in our power.

When a man comes to "rebuke" us for our fault, we should consider the effort which he has made to come; we should take his coming as an expression of his kindly feeling, of his anxiety that there should be nothing to impair the cordiality of our relations to each other, and of his confidence in our willingness to acknowledge our fault if we have been guilty of one. If he is a Christian brother, we should also remember that he has come to us in obedience to the law of Christ. All this will determine the spirit in which we meet him.

Perhaps we may be able to remove at once the sense of injury. We may be able to make it clear that he is altogether mistaken; that we never said what he has heard we said, or that he has put a wrong meaning on it; that we never did the act of which he complains, or that our reasons for doing it were very different from those which he has attributed to us. If there has been a real fault on our part we may think that he has magnified the gravity of it; but if we have given him real cause of offence we shall not attack him for his exaggerated feeling, or for expressions of censure which, as we may think, are far in excess of the wrong. We shall remember, too, that we are hardly fair judges in our own case; and when there has been a real offence we shall acknowledge it without qualification, and offer to make all possible reparation.

The confession of our fault should be made seriously, and with genuine sorrow. There are some men who are always ready to confess their shortcomings at the first words of remonstrance. Indeed there are men who confess their faults in the most amiable manner when no one is bringing a charge against them; but, as Hazlitt says, they give the impression that they believe that their own weaknesses are as good as other men's virtues. Confessions of that kind, when made in answer to a grave "rebuke," are insulting and irritating. If there has been wrong, whether the wrong was serious or trifling, the acknowledgment should have some depth of feeling in it, and should be the expression of genuine repentance.

It may sometimes happen that the person against whom we have committed an offence is inferior to us in culture or in social position. Perhaps he may be a person who is in the habit of committing faults of a worse kind than that with which he charges us. I put aside the discussion of the extent to which differences in social position, in education, and in what may be called moral standing, are to affect the mutual relations of those who call each other Christian brethren—simply saying that, to whatever extent such differences are real, a man's superiority should seldom be remembered by himself, and should never be forgotten by others. But if you have wronged your inferior you have forfeited your superiority until the wrong is acknowledged and, if possible, atoned for. It will not do to say that the man against whom the offence has been committed is so far beneath you that he has no right to humiliate you by insisting on the confession that you have treated him unjustly or ungenerously; the offence which you have committed has, to some extent, changed your relative positions, and the offence must be confessed before you can regain the superiority which you have forfeited. If your superior intellectual culture and superior moral standing do not make your conscience more delicate than his, and your sensibility to sin more keen, your superiority is of a very doubtful kind. If your superiority is real and gives you substantial power you are only doing the greater mischief by refusing to do the will of Christ. The man you have wronged has obeyed Christ's law by coming to tell you of your offence; you are bound to obey Christ's law by acknowledging that you have wronged him.

And now, to return to the duty of the man who has received the injury, Christ's law is clear and definite:—"If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day and seven times turn again to thee saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

That does not mean merely that we are not to retain any ill-feeling against him because of his offence. It means that the offence is to be blotted out, is to become as though it had never been. The old tides of affection and confidence which had ebbed are to rise again and to flow over the offence and cover it out of sight. "Forgive him." God's forgiveness is to be the type of ours. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." There is no genuine forgiveness while any estrangement or coldness remains.

The emphasis and urgency with which our Lord Jesus Christ insisted on the duty of forgiveness are remarkable. He recurred to it again and again. He enforced it by the parable in which the ungracious servant, who, after his lord had forgiven him ten thousand talents, flung into prison his fellow-servant that owed him a hundred pence, is represented as being delivered to the "tormentors," until he has paid all that was due. In the prayer which He gave to His disciples He taught them to say, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." He added to the prayer the ominous words, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." He knew the misery and the sin which always come from an unforgiving spirit.

He knew that the cherishing of resentment and a sense of wrong would be the occasion of strife and hatred among His followers, would break up the peace of families, destroy the unity of Churches, impair the earnestness and vigour of Christian work, quench the joy of Christian worship. He knew how easily a just anger, if it lasts too long, passes into revenge; and how soon the spirit of revenge sours a temper which is naturally kindly, hardens the heart, perverts the conscience, dries up the fountains of all the most gracious affections of the Christian soul, extinguishes the fires of Christian charity, and paralyses the energies of Christian righteousness. The unforgiving spirit is a root of bitterness from which there springs a tree whose leaves are poisonous, and whose fruit, carrying in it seeds of fresh evil, is death to all who taste it.

He had a right when He was on earth to impose this law of forgiveness on His followers; for He had descended from the glory of God, had endured many great sorrows, and was on his way to greater sorrows still, that our sins against Himself might be forgiven; and His work would be incomplete, it would be to a great extent thwarted and spoiled, if His disciples did not enter into His spirit and forgive those who wronged them. He has a right to repeat the law now that He is in heaven. For our sins against God have been forgiven because Christ died for us; and it is impossible for us to resist His appeal when He tells us to forgive our brethren. He has taken us by the hand again and again and led us into the presence of God and asked God to forgive us. When He stands by the side of our erring but penitent brother and says to us, "Forgive him," our hearts must be harder than rock, colder than an iceberg, to refuse to do it.

"If he repent, forgive him;" but if he does not repent, what then?

The circumstances of the case may be such as to compel us to insist on repentance before there can be complete reconciliation. The offence may be so grave that, unless the guilt of it is acknowledged, it will be our duty to continue the expression of our moral resentment. Christ has given a law which is to regulate the action of the Church in relation to a man who refuses to confess and forsake a sin; he is to lose the strength and the blessedness of Christian fellowship. But if the offence is a thing of the past, and if it is not of a kind to affect others as well as ourselves, we shall often feel that, when we have done our best and failed, Christ would have us go beyond the letter of His precept, and forgive the offender, though he does not repent. It may be that in a little time his conscience will acquire greater sensitiveness, and he will perceive the guilt which at present is not plain to him. Some fresh manifestation of Divine goodness or of human kindness may soften his heart as it has never been softened before. He may become conscious, as he has never been conscious yet, of the closeness and tenderness of the ties by which men are bound to each other, and of the serious guilt which attaches to a temper or a habit by which these ties are loosened. Then he will discover his fault, and will confess it.

Meantime we may remember how many acts of sin God has passed over and forgiven in us, which we did not know were sins till long after they were committed, and long after they were forgiven. We may consider how many sins we are probably committing now which we are too dull to recognise as sinful, and of which we do not repent, but which God mercifully pardons.

As God, for Christ's sake, forgives us offences which as yet cause us no humiliation and pain, and which we do not specifically ask Him to forgive, so, for Christ's sake, we shall frankly and heartily forgive our fellow-men those offences against ourselves in which they are conscious of violating no duty, and for which, therefore, it is impossible that as yet they should feel any sorrow. By our very forgiveness we may at least lead them to repentance.

V.

TEMPERANCE.[1]

"*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*"—1 CORINTHIANS ix. 26, 27.

THERE are very many grounds on which we can ask men to promote the temperance reformation. There are *economical* grounds; for whatever opinions we may hold about the legitimacy of the moderate use of alcoholic liquors, it is certain that in this country they are used so immoderately as to lead to an enormous waste of national wealth. I suppose that the English people of all ranks are the most extravagant people in Europe; and those golden years of commercial prosperity which we enjoyed not long ago, but which are not likely to return, encouraged an enormous increase in the expensiveness of our modes of living. If the nation is to be safe from ruin we must learn to be more moderate in our expenditure, and though there is great wastefulness in other directions, one of the most obvious ways of arresting the exhaustion of the national wealth is to diminish the amount of drinking. Another strong reason for promoting the temperance reformation is the *physical suffering* which our present drinking customs entail on vast masses of the people. There are thousands of families in Birmingham that would find it hard to live in comfort if they never drank at all. On the wages which they earn, it would be very difficult for them to pay sufficient rent to live in a reasonably good house, very difficult for them to buy decent clothing, to get wholesome food, very difficult for them to pay for coal and gas, very difficult for them to pay for medicine, and to meet many other of the inevitable expenses of living. But if, when a man earns three or four-and-twenty shillings a week, six or seven shillings go in beer, if when he earns eighteen shillings a week, four or five go in beer, then quite apart from the loss of time, loss of health, and loss of wages resulting from occasional fits of drunkenness, it is a sheer impossibility that he and his wife and children should be able to procure the barest physical comforts. If not a penny were spent in drink, if the man never lost a day's work through being drunk, he and his wife and children would lead a hard life, but his drinking makes their life a life of physical misery. And we may ask you to support the temperance reformation on *moral* grounds. Drunkenness is a debasing, disgusting, horrible vice, and it is the root of other vices as horrible as itself. It sometimes turns kindly, good tempered men into fiends; it is the occasion of a large proportion of the crimes of violence which still disgrace our country. When the drink is in them, men are guilty of many vices and of many cruelties from which they would recoil when sober; and even when the fit of drunkenness is past, it leaves many men in a state of irritability and ill-temper which makes them a terror to those about them. Drunkenness is a gross vice. It destroys the material comfort of large numbers of our people. It leads to an enormous waste of our national resources.

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[1] A Sermon preached in connection with the Temperance Union, in Carrs' Lane Chapel, Birmingham.

On all these grounds the temperance reformation claims our support. But these are grounds on which we can rest our arguments and appeals elsewhere. In this place we can advance to grounds of another kind. Drunkenness is a gross vice; it is also a terrible sin—a sin which the eternal God sternly condemns; a sin which provokes His anger, and which he has threatened to punish with other and more awful penalties than those which it brings upon men in this world. Drunkenness destroys the material comforts of men: it does what is worse than that; it destroys their rest of heart in God, it strips them of the honours which belong to the children of God; sooner or later it will bring upon them the tortures of a terrible moral anguish. Drunkenness is a waste of our material resources; it is also a waste of something infinitely more precious. For the drunkard the infinite love of Christ is wasted, His teaching is wasted, His example is wasted, His death is wasted. For the drunkard the promises of eternal life and blessedness are wasted. He wastes not merely his earthly comfort; he sacrifices for his drink an immortality of glory. These are reasons for promoting the temperance reformation, which should have immense force with those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But when we consider the vice of drunkenness under these aspects, when we consider it in relation to God, in relation to Christian righteousness, in relation to immortality, there are questions raised which are of serious practical interest to those who have never been guilty of drunkenness, and who believe that they are not likely to be guilty of it—questions which are, indeed, of grave importance to those who, by total abstinence, have placed themselves out of the reach of this particular vice. It is not necessary to be a drunkard in order to be guilty of physical sins which imperil our eternal salvation. In the text Paul speaks of the discipline of the body as a necessary part of the Christian life, necessary if he himself is not to miss the great prize for which he is contending. He speaks of the body as though it were his foe. He is plainly regarding it as the seat and stronghold of evil passions and evil tendencies which he must master or else be eternally ruined. In a vigorous metaphor he describes himself as a pugilist in the Grecian games, and he is fighting with his own body. He says that he fights like a man who understands the art; he does not hit out wildly as one that strikes the air, he plants his blows where they will tell. The words "I keep my body under," are far less picturesque than the words which Paul employs. What he says is, "I deliver my blows straight in the face, under the eyes," or, to use our own English equivalent, "I beat it black and blue."

Paul, after his manner, says one thing at a time. Taken by itself this vigorous and passionate way of describing his fight with the body might justify the extremities of asceticism. If our body is our foe, to be punished and crushed, then it might seem our duty to deny it all pleasures, to deny it warmth, and rest, and pleasant food, and pleasant drinks, and everything else for which it craves. It might seem our duty to torture it with a hair shirt, to scourge it with whips, and to reduce it to emaciation by fasting. But that is quite contrary to Paul's teaching elsewhere. He vehemently condemns asceticism, condemns it as a very formidable foe to the Christian faith. He teaches that every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving; and the whole teaching of the New Testament concerning the body is inconsistent with this gloomy severity. The body, we are told throughout the New Testament, is not an element of human imperfection; it is necessary to the integrity of man's nature. It was created not by the devil but by Christ, and it is a wonderful creation. It is also true that Christ created all the pleasant things which delight the eye, the ear, the taste, the touch. He made us capable of physical enjoyment, and He provided the means of physical enjoyment. Physical enjoyment, therefore, cannot be sinful.

Flesh and blood, I say, according to the teaching of the New Testament, are necessary to the fulness and perfection of man's nature in this world. But the intellect is nobler than the flesh; the affections and the conscience are nobler than the intellect; and the height of man's dignity is never reached until his intellect, heart, and conscience are transfigured by the love and righteousness of God. In this hierarchy of life, in these ordered gradations of faculty and power, it is essential that the noblest should have the noblest place and the most vigorous authority, and that the inferior ranks should be kept in their inferior position. When the lower, though necessary parts, of man's nature become insubordinate, when they usurp an importance which is not theirs, they must be suppressed, lashed back again to their proper place. The flesh, with its strong and restless cravings for satisfaction, is very apt to refuse sovereignty to the intellect and to the conscience and to the law of God. Then it becomes necessary to fight it, and to fight it relentlessly until it is subdued. In its right place it is admirable; its pleasures are legitimate; it contributes to the strength and beauty of our whole life. It is only when it rebels against loftier authorities, when it interferes with the diviner aims of life, that it becomes our foe. Paul recognises this fact even in this place. "I fight my body and bring it into subjection." What he says is, that he made his body his slave

He fought it, and made it his servant instead of his master. When slaves revolted, their masters fought them; but slaves were a large part of their masters' wealth—the masters injured themselves when they injured their slaves. It might be necessary to wound them, to maim them, to punish them, in order to keep them in subordination,but it was the master's interest that his slaves should be healthy and strong.

But the trouble is, that with large numbers of men, the body is the master not the servant. To feed it well, to clothe it well, to give it all possible luxuries is their great business in life. They care more for physical health and physical enjoyment than for literature, or for art, or for morality, or for God. Everything is made to give way to the body; the slave is made the prince; the regal powers of the intellect are compelled to do perpetual service; the authority of conscience and the voice of God Himself are disregarded. There are forms of this physical insubordination which are not flagrant enough to call down the moral condemnation of society while society is governed by its present low moral ideals, but which, nevertheless, imperil the eternal salvation of men. Physical habits, in which men indulge without any self-reproach, make the fibre of their nature coarse, and gradually deaden all their loftier activities. Men are guilty of physical indolence, of physical uncleanliness, of excessive sensuous indulgence of many kinds. They eat too much or eat unwisely, they drink too much, though they never get drunk. And in all these ways the flesh gradually masters the spirit. You can see the process going on; men become heavy, dull, and slow; they sink into sluggish stupidity. Whatever brightness and clearness of intellect they once had are gradually lost. Their will becomes irresolute. Their temper becomes moody, irritable, passionate, or melancholy. Peace and joy pass out of their life altogether. Their spiritual affections become languid, hope has no radiance in it, faith no vigour, love no fervour. They have not kept their body under; it is their master, not their slave, and so the light in which they once lived is clouded; year by year it becomes more and more dim; the dimness deepens into darkness, and unless they repent the darkness will deepen into eternal night.

Paul's principle is, that whatever physical habits interfere with the clearness, the elasticity, the vigour of our intellectual, moral, and spiritual life, must be given up. We must fight the body, and make it our slave. Now, as I have said, it it is not drink alone which works this mischief. You may be a total abstainer, and yet be guilty of physical vices which will separate you from Christ and end in eternal destruction.

But drink is one of the commonest causes of men's ruin. For that reason it is wise and necessary to engage in this exceptional crusade against it. Those who originated the Total Abstinence Movement, and those who have sustained it, have rendered an immense service to the country. They have rescued innumerable men and women who had sunk into the vice of drunkenness; they have saved a still larger number of men and women who might have sunk into it. They have given comfort, honour, and peace to innumerable homes, which, but for them, and for their work, would have been scenes of misery and of shame. It is a lawful and honourable work for those who themselves are not imperilled, to share the burdens of their brethren who are exposed to fierce temptation and so fulfil the law of Christ. Yes, your work is a noble one, one which has achieved already a great redemption for large masses of your fellow-countrymen, and it may achieve a greater redemption still.

But the very enormity of the evils which you are trying to lessen, the very efficiency of the means by which you are trying to lessen them, should make you careful not to imperil your movement by unwise and reckless advocacy. It is clear, I think, that the advocates of total abstinence are now in position to carry with them an immense and overwhelming mass of popular sentiment, if they do not, by their own rashness and want of wisdom, betray the cause which is committed to their trust. There have been from time to time, during the last twenty years, occasional indications of a resentment and reaction against the movement which might even now lead to disastrous results, and it is for the advocates of total abstinence to save their cause from this peril.

Do not forget what I reminded you of just now, that a man may be a total abstainer and yet not make his body his slave. Do not lead men to imagine that if they abstain they fulfil all the law and the prophets. You have in the East, wherever Mahomedanism prevails, whole races of total abstainers, and yet these very races are guilty of gross sensuality. Do not be betrayed into the folly of speaking of all drinking as though it were sinful; place your movement on its right foundation, vindicate it upon the eternal principles of morality and of the Christian faith. The principles on which Christian temperance rests is that a man should keep his body in such a condition as to make it the effective servant and comrade of his nobler life. Excessive drinking clouds the brain, dulls the conscience, takes all the force and fire out of the religious affections, and if continued in, will at last quench them altogether. Drinking which does not make a man drunk may work the same evil. You may be drinking a great deal too much and ruining yourselves body and soul, yet never be in danger of falling into the hands of the police, and having to pay 5*s.* and costs. If a man drinks so as to impair his higher life, he commits a sin, whether he gets drunk or not. But it does not follow that because it is a sin to drink so as to impair the higher life, therefore it is a sin to drink at all. Drinking too much is a vice, because it lessens a man's power for serving God and his race. If a man's drinking does not lessen his power for that service, his drinking is not a vice. If a man's drinking increases his power for that service, his drinking is a duty instead of a vice. It is our duty to keep our body in such a condition, whether by drinking or not drinking, that it shall be the vigorous comrade of the higher life, not its master. While a man does this he fulfils the law of temperance, the only law authoritative for all men.

But you say you cannot draw the line at which excess begins between one glass and a dozen. Of course you cannot; and you cannot draw the line at which excess begins between one mutton chop and a dozen; but are you to say that because a man would be guilty of a disgusting vice if he ate a dozen chops at a sitting, he is to be looked upon with suspicion because he takes one? Should that style of argument be followed, then all rational men, all the advocates of a noble and lofty morality, all who are intelligently loyal to Christ, will be bound to offer the total abstinence movement a serious and energetic opposition. This immoral superstition, which sometimes shows itself in connection with the temperance reformation, is almost the only serious peril to which it is now exposed. And let none of you yield to that plausible lie of the devil, which has done more mischief to Christendom, probably, than any other, that because this impression may be useful though it is false, it should not be condemned, should even be propagated. A lie can never serve God or man,—never; and when once any men, no matter how good and noble their cause may be, take into their service that which is ethically and religiously false, they prepare the way for disaster and for ruin. Your true line of argument is clear, plain, and straight. The enormous evils of drunkenness demand a sharp and stringent remedy; to save the drunkard it is indispensable that he should be prevailed upon never to touch the drink which has cursed him. It is an honourable thing for those who themselves could drink in moderation, to abstain in order to give moral support to those who cannot; and further, this abstinence is for most men, in all probability, physically safe, and for many men physically advantageous. The remarkable growth of medical opinion during the last few years in favour of total abstinence adds immensely to the strength of your position.

But there are some of you who, like myself, do not recognise the obligation personally to abstain. You have the impression that you keep your body under by drinking a little, rather than by drinking nothing; that you work more effectively while you drink in moderation than when you abstain altogether, that your brain is clearer, your will firmer, your whole life more vigorous. Your body, so you think, is a more useful slave, a more effective comrade for the moderate use of these drinks. You ought to wish it were not so, and that you could place yourselves frankly and completely by the side of those who are in the advanced line in this movement. But you, too, care for the rescue of the nation from intemperance, and it is for you to rejoice heartily in the zeal, in the earnestness, in the success of those who can wisely practise a severer rule. It is for you to strengthen in their fidelity to their purpose all who have resolved, whether for their own sake or for the sake of other men, to abstain altogether. I know of few sins of carelessness which may lead to worse and more appalling results than the sin of those who, by mockery or entreaty, induce abstainers to drink. You may see the result of your reckless folly some day in men sunk through you into brutality, ruined themselves and the cause of ruin in others. Even if you cannot abstain, you can discourage what are described as the drinking customs of society. There are people on whom you can call at no hour of the day, and I suppose at no hour of the night, without being asked and urged to take what is vaguely called "something." There is one consideration which may perhaps lead some of you to give up that folly. In the slang of the day, it is "bad form." You do not find that practice maintained in houses above a certain social level. It has gone out. Those who cherish and prolong old-fashioned customs may continue it still, but it has ceased to be what so many of you are anxious always to observe, it has ceased to be the "proper" thing, and perhaps that consideration may reach some who cannot be reached by considerations of a graver kind. There are many people, unhappily, who are so miserably superficial and morally frivolous, that all noble laws of conduct fail to touch them, but a reason of that kind may perhaps reach some of them.

But there are other ways in which you can help this reformation. I have a strong conviction that although you can never make a nation virtuous by Act of Parliament, you can do a great deal by legislation to diminish some kinds of vice. Those who speak of the inefficacy of Acts of Parliament to diminish vice are strangely inconsistent; for I wonder what they would say if they were told that no Acts of Parliament could diminish the vice of theft, and that our laws against theft should, therefore, be abandoned. You know very well that laws against theft, though they do not make men honest, do prevent a great many men from thieving. A man is not an honest man simply because he is not a thief. There is many a man who is intensely dishonest who is prevented from thieving by the law and its penalties; and there are many men who have no strength of self-control, who in the Christian sense are not "sober" men, but who would be saved from the vice of drunkenness if the law discouraged seriously and sternly the creation of those temptations to drunkenness which it now permits to exist in nearly every street in this town. I do not believe that in the present temper of the public mind, and with our present social habits, it is possible to close all public-houses in a great town like this; and if it is not possible it is not very much use asking whether it is desirable or not. But it would be quite possible to diminish the number of these houses, to place them under severer regulations, and to carry out severely the regulations that do exist. And it is also possible to multiply such counter and rival attractions as those which have been created in this town, in Liverpool, in Bristol, and in other parts of the country, and which are already telling, and telling powerfully, upon the drinking customs of the communities where they exist.

It is for those who desire to see the nation completely rescued from drunkenness to join in this movement, which is an attempt to unite all who care for this great object. This Union does not pledge its members to abstinence. It asks them to abstain themselves if they can abstain without injury to their work, and to encourage other people to abstain; it endeavours to confirm in abstinence those who are abstaining already; it tries to promote the passing of laws limiting and repressing provocations to drunkenness, and to strengthen all social movements which are likely to increase the general temperance of the community.

VI.

JUDGING OTHERS.

HOW is it that we are so quick in discovering, and so stern in condemning, a slight fault in another man, and are unconscious that we ourselves are guilty of a greater fault—and, perhaps, a greater fault of the same kind? About the fact there can be no doubt. Conscience in some men seems to consist chiefly in a keen eye for other men's sins. They cannot have much time for self-examination, for they are nearly always occupied in the close scrutiny of the character and conduct of their neighbours. They expend so much moral indignation on the sins of others that they can have very little left for their own.

But "why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" There is surely nothing very difficult, there is certainly nothing impossible, in the law which that question suggests. But if it were obeyed, what a mass of uncharitableness and evil-speaking would at once disappear! The keen, cruel east-wind which is always blowing in some families, in some sections of society, in some Churches, making it hard for the gentlest to keep a gentle temper, and destroying the fair blossoms of sympathy and trustfulness, would cease to blow, and life would become beautiful as an orchard under a warm sun and kindly breezes from the south.

This question of Christ's suggests that as soon as we think we see a fault in another, and before we condemn him, we should ask ourselves whether we are guilty of the same fault. And we should not take it for granted that we are innocent because it has never occurred to us that we are guilty. We may see the "mote"—a very small fault—in our brother's eye, and not know that there is a "beam" big enough to support the roof of a house in our own eye. It seems strange, but nothing is more common.

People have complained to me that some of their brothers and sisters were intensely selfish in the arrangement of business affairs, in which all the members of the family had a common interest; and the people who complained were showing a reckless disregard of every one's claims but their own. Some of the most intolerant men I have known were vehement in their denunciations of intolerance. I have heard men uncharitable in their denunciations of uncharitableness. Sometimes the fault appears in a most amusing form. The complainants are self-convicted. Out of their own mouths they are condemned. For instance, some years ago I used occasionally to hear that my congregation was very unsocial; that people came and went, and no one showed them any attention; and the censure was sometimes sustained by what appeared to the complainant unanswerable proof. "I have attended this church," they have said, "five years, ten years,"—and in one instance a man said to me, "I have attended thirteen years and no one ever spoke to me." Whether the censure was really just concerning the congregation generally is an open question. I think that for the most part we were no worse than similar congregations in which there are always very many strangers, and in which the regular attendants are drawn from remote parts of a large town. But so far as the persons who made the complaint were concerned the censure was clearly well founded. They proved their own case, and no reply was possible. They had been members of the congregation for many years and nobody had ever spoken to them; of course that meant that through all those years they had spoken to nobody. Perhaps it was because they were reserved, or shy, or modest; but whatever may have been the reason, there was clearly a "beam" in their own eye, though there might have been a "mote," and something larger than a mote, in their brother's eye.

There is something amusing when a man makes a complaint which recoils so plainly upon himself, but the instances are innumerable in which precisely the same thing happens, though in forms less flagrant and grotesque. I have noticed that the sins to which men are specially sensitive in others are precisely the sins to which they are themselves most inclined; so that there is a certain measure of *primâ-facie* evidence that we are guilty of the faults which we are quick to discover in other people.

Of course this is only a broad general statement, which must be taken with many qualifications ; it is specially true, however, in reference to those imperfections of character which give us personal annoyance. If any one is constantly irritated by what he supposes to be the conceit of most of his friends and acquaintances, it is quite certain that he is conceited himself. A really modest man is seldom struck with the vanity of other people. Vanity and conceit are offences against our good opinion of ourselves, and the more modest we are, the less likely are we to be wounded. Modest people are rather disposed to feel an innocent admiration of a man who is perfectly satisfied with himself and his doings. They think he knows more about himself than they can know, and they take it for granted that he has adequate reasons for his self-complacency. They wish they had similar reasons for being satisfied with themselves. Perhaps they may see that the man actually possesses the cleverness and the brilliance on which he plumes himself, and it seems quite natural to them that any one possessing such powers should be pleasantly conscious of them. Since they know that they are destitute of shining qualities, his conceit—to which they give another name—does not annoy them. If they gradually discover that the man over-rates himself, has an exaggerated estimate of his capacity and achievements, they are not angry but sorry—sorry because they think that his mistake is likely to bring him into trouble, and sorry because the brilliance they admired has faded. Yes, it is the vain man who is quickest to discover vanity in others. If I think myself the cleverest or the most important person in the room, and want other people to think so too, I am annoyed by the conceit of any one who thinks his own claims greater than mine. If I have a humble opinion of myself, it gives me no pain that other people agree with me, and think themselves wiser, abler, and more accomplished than I am.

And so, if any one complains that most people are selfish, unsympathetic, absorbed in their own pursuits, their own happiness, and their own sorrow, the chances are ten to one that the complainant is conspicuous for the very faults which he condemns. His thoughts are so concentrated on his own concerns that he is impatient because other people think of their concerns and not his. He is unable to enter into their grief or their joy ; when he is wretched he is amazed and indignant that any one can be happy ; when he is happy he thinks it intolerable that other people should be so oppressed with their own sorrows as not to make merry with him in his gladness. He has so high an estimate of the importance of his own work that he thinks other men ought to spend a large part of their time in watching and admiring it, and he wonders at the selfishness which keeps them close at their own occupations when they ought to be showing their sympathy with his. This absorption in everything that relates to himself is the explanation of the universal indifference of which he complains. To secure sympathy we must give as well as take. The country that exports nothing will have no imports; but if it infers that all the rest of the world is in wretched poverty, with no mines, and no timber, and no glorious harvests, the inference will be a false one. As soon as a man finds that he is beginning to think that all human hearts are cold let him suspect himself. When an iceberg floats away from the frozen fields which lie near the pole it cools the waters into which it drifts; the very Gulf Stream sinks in temperature as soon as the mountain of ice touches it.

In a crowd it is the man that pushes hardest who thinks that everybody is pushing him; it is the man who is resolved to make his way to the front who complains that every one wants to get in front of him. If people speak to you roughly, take warning; the probability is that you speak roughly to them.

It is not safe, however, to infer that you are gentle because other people speak to you gently. I remember reading many years ago an essay on the advantages of having a bad temper, and my observation strongly confirms the principal point made by the writer. If a man's temper is bad *enough*, his wife, his children, his friends, the people who have to work with him in business or in public life, will always be on their guard against provoking it. They will keep everything out of his way that is likely to irritate him. They will anticipate his wishes, yield to his whims, and humour his prejudices. They will take care never to say a hasty word in his presence, just as people take care not to throw lighted matches about in a shed where cartridges are being loaded. So that while it is tolerably certain that we treat other people roughly if other people treat us roughly, it is not certain that we are exemplary in our gentleness and courtesy if other people treat us gently and courteously. It may be that we are so touchy and irritable that they are obliged to exercise unusual forbearance and self-control for the sake of averting perpetual storms.

If our faults sometimes discipline the people about us to exceptional virtue, sometimes they have the precisely opposite effect; and in the defects of which we complain in others, we may recognise a moral reaction against much graver defects in ourselves. If a man is always condemning his neighbours and acquaintances for their coldness and reserve, if he says that they keep him at a distance and show him no friendliness, it is very probable that he himself is extremely officious and forward. If he thinks they are cautious, unenterprising, and destitute of enthusiasm, we should not accept his account of them until we have had time to discover whether he himself is exceptionally rash and reckless. If he condemns them as wanting in moral vigour, and as always ready to make excuses for people who have done wrong, we should wait to learn whether he is harsh in his judgments and unmerciful.

The Mote and the Beam—the illustrations of the proverb are endless. Young people especially ought to remember it. There are no critics of human character half so severe as those whose own character is as yet unformed; none who denounce human imperfections with such an air of infallibility as those whose inexperience of life disqualifies them for forming any true conception of the infinite varieties of human temperament and the infinite varieties of temptation by which human virtue is tried. To young people life seems extremely simple. As soon as they hear a stranger speak, they know everything about him. A sentence is a complete and final revelation. A single action is sufficient to glorify a man, or to condemn him to perpetual infamy. They seem to think it possible to judge character as corn-merchants judge a sack of wheat, by looking at a sample which they can take in their hand, or as tailors judge a piece of cloth, by examining a pattern three inches square. They will find by-and-by that most men are not of the same quality all through, and that they are not all of a piece. Human character is very complex. In most of us the base and the noble, the selfish and the generous, the courageous and the cowardly, earth and heaven, are strangely mixed. Even when a man's life is over, the whole story told, the complete evidence put in, it is sometimes hard to give a verdict. But young people are prepared to acquit a man or to hang him as soon as they see him in the dock.

Still more remarkable is the confidence of some men who are no longer young, in their ability to correct other men's faults. This is a task from which wise men shrink. The image which our Lord uses to illustrate its delicacy and difficulty is exquisitely felicitous: " How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye, and lo! the beam is in thine own eye?" Trying to correct a friend's fault is like trying to remove a piece of gravel or of straw from his eye. Your friend must be very patient and must have a great deal of self-control to submit to the operation, for even if you have a keen eye and a firm, delicate hand, you will be almost certain to inflict irritation and distress while you are trying to help him. If you have a "beam" in your own eye and cannot see very well, or if your hand is rough and clumsy, you will force the "mote" in deeper, instead of removing it, increase your friend's torture, and perhaps injure his eye instead of relieving it.

The difficulty is that in most cases we cannot make men believe that there is any "mote" that needs removing. We think that we see it, but they persistently deny that it is there. If we insist on trying to remove it we hurt them so much that they get angry; our good offices produce inflammation and make matters worse.

I have sometimes tried to persuade men that they had a "mote" in their eye, and I confess that I have very rarely succeeded. Now and then you may be able to persuade a man who makes no profession of religion that he has done some wrong thing or has said something that is indefensible; but if I may judge from my own experience, it is very hard to persuade a man who is really a Christian that he has committed any moral fault. Sin, in general he is always ready to acknowledge; but he will not admit a specific moral offence. The reason does not seem far to seek. When a man is conscious that his general purpose is to do the will of God, when he is honestly endeavouring to avoid sin, he is very apt to take it for granted that, in the region of common morality, he cannot have failed seriously. He retreats upon his habitual integrity. He is sure that in the main he means right, and this seems to him to be a sufficient proof that in any particular case he cannot have been in the wrong. His motives are so good that he resents the suggestion that any part of his conduct can deserve blame.

The gift of removing motes from other men's eyes seems to me as rare as that combination of qualities which makes a surgeon a skilful operator. And considering how beautiful and noble a gift it is, I wonder that some people who suppose that they possess it should always exercise it in a way which prevents the persons whom they mean to benefit from knowing even the names of their benefactors. From my own experience of their work, however, I am not sure that they are as skilful as they must imagine themselves to be. Every man that has to do with public affairs will probably agree with me that of the innumerable remonstrances which he receives from anonymous correspondents, there are hardly any that show any keen penetration, any accurate knowledge, any high moral qualities; in most of them the stupidity and the ignorance are about equal.

When attempts of this kind are made to remove the "mote" or the "beam" from the eyes of men accustomed to the rough criticism of public life, they do no harm. They afford a moment's amusement; they confirm the purpose to strike harder at the errors and the sins which are defended by such ignoble and timorous protectors, and then they are thrown into the waste-paper basket and are forgotten. But when similar attempts are made to correct the alleged faults of private persons, they are as cruel as they are cowardly. Anonymous letters of rebuke, signed "Your brother in Christ," "Your faithful but unknown friend," "A Fellow-Christian," "One who prays for you," "One who trusts that God will forgive and sanctify you,"—such letters, I say, when written, not to men like myself, accustomed to fighting, but to private persons, are so dastardly, so base, so cruel, that the writers of them, if they could be discovered, deserve to be held up to public scorn, and to be branded with public infamy. Their unctuous, rancid words about their Christian affection for the person to whom they are writing, about their desire that he may be more holy and may live nearer to God, and about their constant prayers that the letter may be useful, their lying assurances that they write anonymously lest they should give unnecessary pain, when they know that their only reason for writing anonymously is that they have not the courage to sign their names, aggravate the offence. Such persons may have discovered a "mote" in their brother's eye, but they show that they have a "beam" in their own eye, big enough to support—not merely the roof of a house—but the roof of a gaol. Unhappily they often inflict great suffering and sometimes serious moral injury upon the victims of their Christian fidelity. When what seems to a man to be his conscience tells him to do evil that good may come—and a cowardly act is always evil—he may be quite sure that he is being led by the devil rather than by the Spirit of God.

I cannot understand why people write anonymous letters. If they are ashamed of what they write, why do they write it? If they are not, why do they write anonymously? I can imagine only one reason. A man may say—If I signed my name to this letter of rebuke, the man who receives it would be wounded; I should like to give him a hint, but I do not want to inflict on him any unnecessary suffering; if I write anonymously, he will feel sure that the letter must have come from some weak, cowardly, disreputable person for whose opinion he will care nothing; the moral end will be secured, but his scorn for the anonymous writer will prevent him from feeling any pain.

As I have said, this casting out of the "mote" that is in our brother's eye is always a difficult business, and yet it must sometimes be attempted. When we attempt it we should take special care that our treatment of our brother's faults does not make it harder for him to forsake them. If we can do nothing to remove the "mote," let us at least do nothing to force it in. The secret of right conduct in this matter, as in so many other things, lies in a genuine charity—a charity that shall make us far more desirous that our brother should set himself right than that we should be successful in showing him to be in the wrong—a charity that shall prevent us from assuming an air of superiority over the man whose faults we are trying to amend, and which shall make us feel that for the faults of our brother we ourselves are, perhaps, partly responsible. For we are all members one of another. The moral defects which pain us in our brethren may, perhaps, have been occasioned by grave defects in ourselves; and in condemning others we should always remember that if we ourselves had been nobler, more upright, more generous, they, perhaps, might have sinned less flagrantly.

VII.

COURTESY AND THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE.

A GREAT evangelist with his soul on fire for the restoration of the human race to God is rarely able to care for anything except the central elements of the religious life. He is in an agony of earnestness to prevail on men to repent of sin, to appeal to the Divine mercy, to surrender themselves to the authority of the Divine will. To nearly everything else he is indifferent. About many moral questions of serious importance he will say little. He thinks that nearly everything must come right in time if men discover their own guilt and the righteousness and love of God. About what may be described as the minor moralities—courtesy, for example—he would think it an intolerable waste of time to speak at all.

It would be foolish to find fault with such a man as this. Every one must do his own work. And there is a large measure of truth in the view which is natural to a fervent revivalist. The supreme thing is to induce men to break with sin, to realize the infinite and eternal world by which they are environed, to accept the will of God as the law of life. As long as this is not done, nothing is done. When this is accomplished a man has in him the root of all perfection.

But when the crisis is over there are many questions to ask, and a great deal of hard work to be got through. How, and to what extent, does the Divine law differ from the laws of morality which are sustained by the common opinions of the society to which we belong? Are there any personal habits of ours that society approves or does not condemn, which God requires us to give up? Is there anything in our temper and spirit that society easily forgives but which must be changed if we are to win God's approbation? When we have discovered a Divine law, how are we to be disciplined to obedience? There may be less of excitement in the quiet endeavour to learn what God's idea of life really is, and in the effort to fulfil it, than there was in the great struggle which determined whether we would acknowledge His authority and submit to it; but the struggle comes to nothing unless after it is over we give our strength to learning God's law and keeping it.

I have sometimes seen, in the neighbourhood of great towns, streets of houses, half-built or less than half-built, which were begun by some enterprising capitalist who was unable to go on with them. In some cases there were the foundations and nothing more. It was no doubt a great thing to get the foundations well laid, and this is what is done when a man confesses from his heart the authority and love of Christ; but a foundation is not a house. In some cases the walls were up and the roof on; but the mere shell was left, with no window-frames in the ghastly-looking windows, no flooring laid on the joists, no doors hung on the door-posts, no plaster on the walls, and of course no paper and no paint. Very like rows of half-finished Christians! The foundations of character are sound, the walls are strong, the roof is safe; but how much there is to be done before they will be perfect in Christ!

Now it is the tendency perhaps of most Christian men that are intensely in earnest in these times, but especially of those who are the children and heirs of the Evangelical Revival, to be continually laying foundations, and to forget that conversion to God and faith in Christ are the beginning, not the end, of the Christian life. We think it a great matter if in addition to laying the foundations we can build up the walls of solid, necessary virtues, and get a roof on them to keep the character of a man from being ruined by wind and frost and rain; but the details of conduct are left uncared for. We are honest stone-masons and bricklayers, but for finer work we have not much taste and not much faculty. While there is so much to be done in order to rescue large masses of men from an utterly irreligious life, this seems natural, perhaps praiseworthy, certainly inevitable. When men really care for any one great object they generally care very little for anything else.

But Christ cared for everything worth caring for. George Whitefield, I think, would never have dreamt of preaching about courtesy and good manners; Christ did preach about them. It reminds one of the infinite calmness and comprehensiveness of the Divine thought. The same mind that guides the stars in their vast and awful circuits, moulded the frail blossom of the wild flower, and gave it its tint and its perfume. Christ, who was about to die for all the sin of all the world, was troubled when He saw the guests at a dinner eager for the most honourable seats. It offended His idea of the modesty and kindliness which ought to characterize social intercourse, and He condemned the fault in a parable.

It may be regarded as a very slight fault, a fault which does not affect the solid qualities of a man, a fault which it lies beyond the province of a Christian preacher or moralist to condemn, and which in our days may be left for correction to the essayist whose special business it is to discuss small questions of social ethics and to use the weapons of a kindly raillery to correct the lighter follies and infirmities of men. But though the fault itself may be corrected by a laugh just as blossoms may be nipped by a keen east wind, the spirit and temper out of which the fault comes will not be changed; nor will even the sharp pruning knife of a cynical moralist make the real inward life any better, though it may cut away some of the more ludicrous and contemptible outgrowths of it.

Christ appeals to a great principle, asserts a universal law, lays the axe to the root of the evil tree, tells men to change their inward spirit and so to change their outward manners. He goes at once to the heart. This ungracious and unmannerly contention for the most honourable seats was bad in itself; it was still worse as a sign of the habitual vanity and self-assertion of the men who were guilty of it. For Christ treats the discourtesy which occasioned His rebuke as only one of the manifestations of a spirit which is constantly leading to envy and bitterness in families, alienation among friends, distrust, jealousy, and conflict among those who ought to be working heartily together in the service of mankind and for the glory of God. The chief seat, the most honourable position, the most conspicuous place—this is what many men are always seeking, seeking unscrupulously, no matter what pain they inflict on their allies, no matter what injury they may do to a cause which they profess to love.

A man is not honoured as he should be in a Church—I have heard of such cases, though they are less common than might have been expected—and he becomes the centre and leader of a party of discontent. A man is not elected to the management of a religious or benevolent organization with whose aims and methods he has the heartiest sympathy, and he shows his annoyance by fierce and angry attacks on its officials and its policy; he is perfectly sincere in his criticisms, and it does not occur to him to ask how it was that he did not discover that the institution was badly managed before he had received personal mortification. In a town council a man thinks that his services and capacity have given him a claim to the chairmanship of a committee; some one else is appointed whose claims, as he thinks, are inferior to his own, and then he goes off the committee altogether, or refuses to work, and makes the work which other men are doing as troublesome as he can. This miserable spirit shows itself in a hundred ways. Unless some people can have the chief seat at the feast, the wine is turned into vinegar and every pleasant dish into ashes; they are wretched themselves, and they do their best to spoil the joy of every one else.

When a man is conscious of resentment at a real or imaginary slight, when he is annoyed because other men receive honour, place, and praise which he thinks due to himself, when he feels disposed to leave the ranks in a sulk because he is not promoted to command, he should consider how contemptible the same spirit would seem to him if shown by any one else; he should lay to heart the unwelcome discovery that in work which he had regarded with some complacency as an evidence of religious zeal or public spirit, his motives have been very mixed; and above all, he should remember that Christ found the root of this vanity in a fatal defect lying deep in the spiritual life: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted:" "The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; but he which is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

A man may legitimately desire a position which brings honour with it, but only for the sake of the service which the position would enable him to render to an institution he cares for—to his town, his country, or his church. When he tries to get it for the sake of the honour, he is scheming for the chief seat at the feast, and comes under our Lord's condemnation. The test of character and spirit lies here—Do we want to serve or to rule? To give or to get? Are we thinking of glory or thinking of work?

The law of Christ is a law of service: to the man who is penetrated with the spirit of Christ, the humblest place is the highest place if it is the place in which he can do most for God and for man, and the obscurest duties are the most honourable, if, by discharging them, he can contribute most effectively to the triumph of the Divine love over the miseries and sins of mankind. To serve men for Christ's sake, in Christ's name, as His representative, though the service wins no praise, though it is met with coldness, ingratitude, calumny, by those to whom it is rendered—this is the true Christian life.

This law, if it were universally obeyed, would soon change the whole order of human affairs; the golden years would begin; the sorrows, the conflicts, and the bitterness of the troubled centuries would pass away, and would be remembered as an evil dream.

If in every house of business in England, every one from the head of the firm to the youngest porter was simply eager to serve; if this were the only rivalry, who could serve the firm most; if all the partners had this spirit, if the managers, the travellers, the clerks, the foremen, the workmen had it, we should soon have a kind of commercial prosperity which we have never dreamt of; and, what is infinitely more important, our places of business would not only be free from present vexations and cares, but would be a school for the great employments of the blessed life beyond the grave. The law is worth very little if it does not rule us in business as well as in the Church; for business covers the greater part of human life, occupying six days out of seven, and until Christ's authority is obeyed in common things we are in active revolt against Him. We pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven: *on earth*, this must mean in the affairs of earth, during the hours spent in counting-houses and workshops as well as during hours spent in religious worship and religious work; and Christ has taught us that it is God's will that we should be eager to serve.

If in every public institution, in the management of hospitals, in the conduct of municipal and political business, every man wanted to serve and cared nothing for the credit of the service, was as willing to do work of which the public never hears as to do work which attracts universal praise, far more work would be done, work that is done now would be better done, and the greater part of the friction which now impedes work and worries those who have to do it would disappear.

I am bound, indeed, to say, after having had the opportunity of watching the public life of a great town for many years, and watching very much of it, not from without but from within, that I have seen an immense deal of work done in this spirit. In the conduct of philanthropic and educational institutions, in municipal and political life, the amount of loyal and laborious service which has been silently rendered by men whose names are almost unknown to the town, and who have got nothing for their work except the satisfaction of doing it, has been to me a perpetual source of satisfaction and delight. But here, and, I suppose, everywhere else, the ideal is still remote.

The law may look hard,—to work for men without reward, without gratitude, without honour,—flesh and blood cannot endure it. But the severity of the law has a charm for men of a generous and noble nature; and there is something in men who can hardly be called generous or noble that is reached by the contagion of a lofty example. Every man that serves the public with an enthusiasm of unselfishness will call many into the service whose work will be largely unselfish.

But with most of us it seems as if the law could not assert its authority over more than one or two departments of life. In these it is a relief to rise to moral heights lying far above the level of our common hours; but to remain at this elevation always is too severe a strain. Religious men are sometimes charged with observing "days, and months, and years;" and they are told—with perfect truth—that a religion which is good only for Sundays is worthless. But there are men that do not profess to be religious, who in morals seem open to a similar charge and a similar condemnation.

In business some men are hard as a flint, in public work singularly unselfish. In making money some men are a byword for their rapacity and unscrupulousness; they care not whom they crush; they drive the hardest bargains; they assert their rights relentlessly, and to the farthest limits of the letter of the law; they are mean, tricky, parsimonious. But the money which they get in these miserable ways they give away by handfuls; they found charitable institutions, and make themselves famous by the splendour of their munificence.

The morals of such people are very like the religion which shows itself on Sunday and not in the week. I have not much inclination to glorify the intermittent unselfishness, the occasional generosity, by which the baser qualities of their lives are relieved. Happily there are men of another sort, who are unselfish in their business as well as in the service of the town and the country, generous within the four walls of their counting-houses as well as when they are in the public eye.

The real secret of all perfection is to live with God. It is wonderful what calmness and equability this gives to life, what a sense of tranquillity in the midst of outward storm, what freedom from worry, from the fever of ambition, from the mortifications of vanity. If we can please Him it is enough. What are other voices, speaking blame or praise, compared with His?

And when the dignities and hopes of the Christian life are vividly present to the heart and exert their legitimate influence over the imagination—for the imagination should be made the fast ally of the will of God—the most brilliant and enduring of earthly triumphs become very dim. We have access to God, are akin to Him, are His children, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ of eternal righteousness, and wisdom, and blessedness, and glory; what is the highest earthly rank, the rank which is far beyond the reach of the commonalty of men—what is fame, though of the noblest sort, reaching to distant lands and resounding through many generations—what are these, compared with the great position and great inheritance of those who are in Christ?

A further correction of the spirit of personal ambition, and of that evil temper which makes us impatient and ill at ease when others receive distinctions which we covet for ourselves, will come from the spirit of charity. A genuine love for other men will make us eager to do them honour. They are not our rivals; they are our allies, our brethren. Their claims will take precedence of our own. We shall not merely yield to other men, without resentment, places of honour and distinction; we shall promote their elevation; in honour we shall prefer one another. A fierce struggle to win reputation, or even to win positions of authority and influence, in which, as we think, we might be able to serve others as well as ourselves, is as inconsistent with the law of Christ as a fierce struggle for material wealth. Covetousness takes many forms; and an apostle tells us that the covetous man is an idolater.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and if we are "in Christ," we, too, shall find it "more blessed to give than to receive." We misconceive the true genius of the Christian revelation if we suppose that it allows us to make it our chief business to care for our own interests—even for our own salvation. We trust Christ to save us, and this leaves us free to live for the welfare and salvation of other men.

The re-assertion of this truth is the enduring glory of the Protestant Reformation. Devout souls had been sorely exercised in making sure of their own escape from perdition. They were never sure that their sins were remitted. Even if mortal sin was forgiven, they had to dread the fierce anger of purgatorial fires. They gave themselves to fasting and prayer; they retreated to monasteries and deserts to escape from the touch of the evils which imperilled their eternal salvation. Some, many indeed, chose a nobler way; but the solitary life was felt by tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands to be the safest. Luther taught men that for their own salvation they might trust to the infinite mercy of Christ, and that it was the will of Christ that those whom He was saving should ally themselves with Him in saving and serving other men. This is the true Evangelical Faith. The spirit of Christ is a spirit of Service.

And the spirit of Service is akin to the spirit of Courtesy. It is true, no doubt, that grace and gentleness of manner may come from early education and from social discipline, and is no sure evidence of a kindly heart. A man is largely made by the society in which he has lived. He speaks English because he has lived in England; he speaks good English because the people he has lived with spoke good English; he catches the accent of the county in which he was born, and the Northumbrian will speak with a burr to the end of his days. And so we catch the manners of the people about us: if they are courteous we shall be courteous; if they are rough, violent, reckless, we are likely to be the same; and even when our spirit has become kindly our manners may remain for a time very much what they were before.

"For a time," but only for a time. The inward spirit will make its power felt in the outward bearing. The Charity which suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, will soften the harshness of the voice and change the expression of the countenance; it will make self-assertion, which is the root of discourtesy, give place to consideration for the happiness and comfort of others. The conventional forms of courtesy may never be acquired; these vary in different countries; they vary in the same country in different ages; they vary in the same country and the same age in different classes of society; but the man who has a gentle and unselfish spirit has the essential qualities of a gentleman.

To "honour all men" is a Christian law; and even apart from positive precept it should be impossible for a Christian man to treat others with disrespect. He should be the most kindly and courteous of men. To him all the people with whom he is living, his neighbours, the men and women whom he meets accidentally, while travelling in his own country or in foreign lands, are touched and transfigured by the light of an infinite and eternal world. They are not merely masters, servants, tradesmen, labourers, merchants, physicians; they have in them the wonderful capacity of receiving the life of God and winning glory, honour, and immortality. They may live in a mean house, but at last they may have their home in the palaces of heaven; they may be poorly clothed, but some day we may see them in shining raiment walking the streets of gold; they may work at a mean trade, but they may have a most honourable place in the eternal city of God. To-day they may be serving *us;* to-morrow—who knows?—they may be among the princes of heaven, and *we* among the commonalty of the saved.

Courtesy is itself a form of service. By gentleness of manner, by an unobtrusive sympathy, by thoughtfulness for others in little things, we may smooth the roughnesses of life for those with whom we live, soothe their vexations, and contribute more to their real happiness than by great and signal acts of generosity. On the other hand a harsh, careless word may inflict a worse wound than a blow, and the discomfort created by habitual indifference to the convenience, tastes, opinions, and prejudices of those about us may be harder to bear than positive physical pain. Discourtesy occasions not merely suffering, but sin; and Christian courtesy is a "means of grace" to all who have the happiness to receive it.

VIII.

SYMPATHY.

SYMPATHY, it may be said, is an accident of temperament, and cannot be raised to the rank of a duty. There are people who cannot help being distressed by the troubles of their relatives, their friends, their neighbours, and even by the troubles of strangers; and everybody's happiness makes them, for a time at least, the happier. They are saddened by the sight of a funeral, though they may not know the dead man's name, and they feel a thrill of sympathetic delight whenever they see a line of wedding carriages. On the other hand, there are people who are naturally cold, they cannot help it; by no energy of moral effort can they "rejoice with them that rejoice" or "weep with them that weep." Sympathy cannot be commanded by volition, and, therefore, it cannot be made a matter of moral obligation.

But the same objection might be urged with almost equal force against the obligation of many other duties. There is no doubt a felicity of natural constitution which makes it easy to practise many virtues; and there are some men who are born with a constitution which makes many virtues very difficult. Immense as is the province of Free Will, it almost seems as if the foundations of character were laid for us by other hands than our own.

The moral life is largely affected by the fineness of the texture of brain and nerve, by the vigour of the pulse, by the soundness of the lungs, by the action of many most obscure physical forces. All this is true and yet we cannot treat Morals as merely a branch of Physiology.

A man may be so made that it is very hard for him to overcome sluggishness. He may find his happiness in a tranquillity which approaches sleep, as others find theirs in climbing mountains, in hunting in shooting, or in the vigorous activity of the intellect. His ideal Heaven is the Nirvana of Buddhism. But except in rare cases, here and there, Indolence is not a physical infirmity but a vice. Intemperance in eating, in drinking, or in other forms of sensual indulgence, may be largely the result of hereditary tendencies. But Temperance is a duty, and the cases are very rare in which it is right or safe to regard Intemperance as nothing more than a disease.

It may be answered that these illustrations are hardly to the point. A man may force himself to his work however much he dislikes it; and a man may abstain from actual physical excess however much he may desire it. But Sympathy is not to be compelled.

Granted. Take one or two other cases. Some children are naturally docile and affectionate; others seem naturally sullen, ungracious, and wayward ; but to be obedient and loving are among the duties of children ; and disobedience, wilfulness, and a want of affection for parents and for brothers and sisters are very grave faults. Some men have a natural disposition so soft and kindly that to live with them is like living under southern skies; others have a temper—they seem to have been born with it—which is worse than a perpetual east wind. The kindliness of the one man is not created by volition ; and volition cannot dispel the gloom, the discontent, the impatience of the other. And yet good temper is not a mere fortunate accident like robust strength or personal beauty, it is a virtue ; and a bad temper is not a mere calamity like a club-foot or a hare-lip, it is a vice. And so, while some men, because of their natural temperament, find it easier than others to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep," Sympathy has its place among the great moral virtues.

I say that Sympathy has its place among the great moral virtues. There is nothing about it in the Ten Commandments, but in the Christian code it stands side by side with justice, truthfulness, temperance, industry, and all other moral duties. It is not merely a gracious ornament of character. It is as essential a part of the Christian life as prayer and worship, or as faith in the existence of God, in judgment to come, in the divinity of Christ, and in His death for the sins of the world. It is necessary to insist on this point.

Sympathy is a plain, commonplace, universal duty, not a "counsel of perfection." It is our duty to tell the truth to every man; all systems of morality insist on it; but Christian morality insists that it is our duty to rejoice with every man in his joy. It is our duty to be honest to every man; the obligations of honesty were enforced by "the scribes and the Pharisees;" but Christ said, "except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Christian morality requires us not only to be honest to every man, but to feel sorrow for him in all his sorrow.

The obligation must not be so qualified and limited as to be practically suppressed. There are people with whom it is very easy to sympathise in their gladness and their grief. But it is our duty to be honest and to tell the truth to all kinds of people, and the obligations of Sympathy are equally general. It would not do to say: "I tell the truth to people I like and tell lies to other men," or, "I am honest to my friends and cheat strangers;" nor will it do to say, "I sympathise with people I care for, and to the sorrow and happiness of the rest of the world I am indifferent." The law is a universal one: "Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

This duty does not rest merely on the authority of the apostle Paul, who has stated it with such perfect felicity in his Epistle to the Romans. If critical editors of the New Testament declared that the fifteenth verse of the twelfth chapter of that Epistle must be omitted, the obligations of Sympathy would not be at all impaired. The moral duties of the Christian life do not appear or vanish with the "readings" which critical editors sanction or reject. They have foundations which are not disturbed by the accidental errors of copyists. They are not rooted in "texts," but in the very substance of the revelation of Christ.

This particular precept is only one application of the great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To sympathise with others in their misery and their joy is to obey the great central law of Christian conduct: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . . Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." If we perfectly fulfil these obligations, we shall rejoice in the health, the strength, the honour, the success of other men as heartily as in our own, and we shall be grieved by whatever grieves them. The Christian duty of sympathy arises from the discovery which has come to us through Christ of the intimacy of our relations to all mankind. An isolated, selfish life is impossible to us. All men are dear to the heart of God, and therefore they must be dear to us. We and they have one Father in heaven; we and they are brothers. If we have a brotherly spirit, we shall "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

There is one reason for obeying this law which deserves serious consideration. We owe sympathy to other men because it is one of the principal and most effective means of contributing to their moral perfection; and because, by withholding it, we inflict upon them grave moral injury. We cannot all be preachers, missionaries, visitors of the poor, or public philanthropists, and when we see the immense amount of moral evil that is in the world, we may be very unhappy because we can do so little to diminish it. And the moral evil which troubles a fine nature is not merely the profligacy, or the brutality, or the flagrant dishonesty which removes men from decent and reputable society. There is moral evil of another kind, with which all of us are frequently in close contact. In men and women who have many admirable qualities, who are truthful, upright, and temperate, who discharge with exemplary fidelity many private and many public duties, there are grave defects of temper and spirit. They are hard, wilful, impatient; they are guilty of reckless self-assertion; they are suspicious, contemptuous, ungenerous; they remind one of noble trees that require warmth and sunshine, but which have been discouraged by gloomy skies, and chilled, tormented by cold harsh winds. If they had only had kindly influences about them, their growth would have been lovely and beautiful. Some of us may not be able to do much to recover those who are morally lost, but we may all do something to lessen the hardness and to add to the moral grace of those with whom we live. Genuine human sympathy is a moral benefit to a man; when the sympathy has a Christian quality and is the result of our union with Christ, it is a channel of Divine grace.

Sympathise with a man in his prosperity and you will do very much to protect him from the moral perils to which his prosperity exposes him. A man gets rich and he sees that people regard him with envy. They think that he has had better fortune than he deserves. He has not worked harder than they have worked; he is no cleverer than they are; and they say that his success is the result of accident, and is no credit to him. Or, worse still, they make his success a ground for depreciating his character. They hint that he has been grasping; that he has gone very near the bounds of honest trading, and they are not quite sure that he has always kept within them. If all his business transactions had been quite legitimate, they think that he would not have got rich so rapidly.

Now if you *know* that a man is carrying on his business on dishonourable principles—if he lies; if he is tyrannical; if he takes an unfair advantage of people who happen to come into his power; then, whether he is getting richer or poorer, you are bound to refuse him your moral approval. He should be no friend of yours; you have no right to speak well of him, whether he is in danger of bankruptcy, or whether he has made his way to great wealth. But if you begin to have hard thoughts of him when he has achieved great success; if he feels that you, an old friend, have no honest delight in his prosperity, you are not only unjust to him, you may do him serious moral harm. If you are cold to *him* because he has become richer than you are, he will be cold to *you* because you are poorer than he is. If *you* think of his wealth with discontent, *he* will think of it with exaggerated complacency. If you regard his success, which is a great matter to *him*, with indifference, do not be surprised if he regards, with similar indifference, your troubles and losses which are great matters to *you*.

There is always danger that when a man gets rich he will cease to have a brotherly heart towards other men; it is the duty of his old friends to do what they can to save him from that danger—not by preaching to him, unless they are very sure that they can preach well—but by rejoicing with him in his riches. Some good people have it on their conscience to say "faithful things"—a euphemism for "disagreeable things"—to any young relative or acquaintance of theirs that becomes very prosperous. They think themselves bound to warn him against the pride, ostentation, extravagance, social ambition and neglect of religious duty into which he is likely to be betrayed. Well, if they begin by rejoicing with him in his wealth, and rejoicing very heartily, they may do him some good; but if they have no genuine delight in his good fortune, they are certain to do harm. Let his old friends keep a brotherly spirit towards him and it will be easier for him to keep a brotherly spirit towards them; and their sympathy will help to keep him modest and generous.

The same law holds in relation to success of other kinds. A man by his ability, his public zeal, and perhaps by favouring circumstances, rises rapidly to a position of influence and honour—too rapidly, perhaps, for his moral safety. If other men rejoice with him in his success he may be kept right; but depreciate his power—say that his rise is owing to chance rather than merit—and you will provoke him to self-assertion. Envy him and you will make him contemptuous. Sneer at his infirmities, which might have passed without notice in the shade, but which become very apparent in the sunlight, and he will form the habit of regarding with scorn the men who are so mean and so shallow that they cannot recognise great qualities and great services because they are associated with some defects. Be jealous of him and he will be domineering. Be selfishly indifferent to his triumph and he will selfishly enjoy it.

But write him a hearty letter when he is appointed to a distinguished position—grasp his hand with warm congratulation when he has made an able speech or shown in some administrative work conspicuous ability—if he is praised by those whose praise is an exceptional distinction let him know that his delight is not greater than yours, and you will keep his temper sweet, and will prevent him from being inflated by his success. His honours will seem less exclusively his own if you make him feel that they have increased your happiness; it will seem as if you shared them with him, as if they were yours as well as his, and you will do your part to save him from vanity and conceit.

When trouble comes upon men your sympathy may lessen the bitterness of their grief, and may prevent them from yielding to a hard resentment against God and against the whole order of the world. It is in loneliness that the heart becomes wild and savage, and breaks out into revolt against heaven and earth. We keep our moral sanity by contact with the healthy moral life of other men.

You may not be able to say a word to lessen the magnitude of your friend's trouble. The more you think of it the more terrible it may seem. Not an alleviating circumstance may be discoverable. No matter; let the broken heart feel that you share the sorrow, and this will give some relief.

There is a mystery in the power of sympathy that seems related to one of the central mysteries of the universe. By sympathy we can lessen the bitterness of other men's sorrows; by sympathy we can even lessen the shame and anguish of other men's sins. In some way—we cannot tell how—we can bear their griefs, and even bear their guilt. He who is the Son of Man as well as the Son of God, Christ Jesus, the Brother of us all, has illustrated that law in the most tragic and sublime form; the sorrows and the sins of the race came upon Him.

The great thing is to *feel* sympathy; but it is also a duty to let people know that you feel it. Never imagine that it will make no difference to them whether they know it or not. Give them credit for being brotherly. Take it for granted that they care for you as you care for them. Do not say, they will not miss me at the wedding, or the funeral, or the house-warming. If you take your heart with you, be sure that you will add to the joy of the festival or lessen the gloom of the grief.

You do not know how slight an expression of sympathy is a source of strength and relief. Go to your friend in his trouble, even if you can say nothing; write to him, if you can only tell him that you share his suffering. Ingenious attempts to explain to him that he is probably exaggerating the greatness of the calamity which has fallen upon him, and overlooking considerations which might lessen his distress, will probably produce resentment. He will feel that he knows more about it than you do, and that you are presumptuous, impertinent, sacrilegious, in your attempts to measure the exact limits of his trouble, and to determine what ought to be the limits of his grief. What he wants is not your ingenious philosophy, but just a touch of your heart.

Soon after I became a minister, and while I was still a very young man, a great loss fell on a family in my congregation. The husband died a year or two after marriage. I went to see the widow. Her anguish was of that silent, self-restrained sort which it is always most terrible to witness. There were no tears; there was no cry of complaint; not a word about the bright life which had been so suddenly darkened; not a word about the present agony or about the gloom and desolation of the years to come. Her grief was dumb. I was oppressed by it; I could say nothing. The sorrow seemed beyond the reach of comfort; and after sitting for a few minutes I rose in some agitation and went away without saying a word. After I had left the house, and when I had recovered self-possession, I felt humiliated and distressed that I had not spoken; I thought that perhaps it would have been better not to have gone at all. I do not feel so now. Sometimes the only consolation we can offer our friends is to let them know that we feel that their sorrow is too great for any consolation of ours.

Some people have what may be called the *gift* of sympathy, and a charming gift it is. Easily, naturally, without effort, they respond to all the changing circumstances and moods of those about them. They have tears for the sorrows of their friends and a flood of sunlight for their joys. They pass at once into the life of every one with whom they care to come into contact. They actually feel the grief or the joy that is present to their imagination. But for the high authority of M. Diderot, I should have supposed that this is the temperament that makes a man a great actor.

The gift is a lovely one. But, to use the old phrase, it is necessary to distinguish between the "gift" and the "grace." There is a certain luxurious enjoyment in receiving into one's own life the brightness and the shadows that come from the joys and sorrows of other men. The response, so prompt, so gracious, to every appeal from without, may have no moral element in it. The sympathy with misfortune may be followed by no serious endeavour to lessen it; the sympathy with joy may be soon over, and may be followed in an hour by a sarcasm or a sneer. The sympathetic temperament is not always associated with a genuine devotion to the interests of other men.

If it is a duty to give sympathy, it is also a duty to receive it. The sullen or contemptuous rejection of it is a vice, and is a sign of the same unbrotherly spirit as the refusal to give it. It is the sign that a man has declined to accept his true relations to the race, and that he is isolated and absorbed in his own happiness or misery. By rejecting sympathy we do harm to the person who offers it, for we check the growth of a form of human perfection. It is a sin to discourage a man who wants to be truthful; it is also a sin to discourage a man who wants to show that he shares our trouble or our gladness. If we have any depth of nature we shall not be repelled because the form in which the sympathy is expressed may happen to be rough and ungracious, or even artificial. We ought to recognise the water of life even when it is brought us in the commonest of earthen vessels.

By rejecting it we wrong others, wiser and nobler than ourselves, to whom the man may be afraid to offer it, because we have refused to receive it. And we wrong ourselves, for we confirm our unbrotherly selfishness.

How are we to create a sympathetic spirit, if we are conscious that our natural temperament is unsympathetic? The question would be difficult to answer if the sympathetic spirit had really to be *created*. But it has only to be developed. It is in our heart somewhere, and would show itself if it had a fair chance. Perhaps our circumstances have been unfriendly to its natural growth, and we have never tried to cultivate it. It is curious to contrast the care and industry with which men cultivate their intellect, with their carelessness in the cultivation of moral perfection. No one supposes that intellectual vigour and keenness, and delicacy of discrimination, will come of themselves, and without discipline and painstaking; but many men seem to suppose that the corresponding qualities of the moral life may be left to take their chance. We insist that our sons and daughters shall follow many studies, not for the mere sake of acquiring knowledge, but for the sake of their disciplinary power. Very much of this knowledge is lost in a very few years after they have left school or college, but the studies have answered their purpose—the intellect has been awakened; it has been "broken in;" it has been made capable of persistent industry; its native force has been increased; its powers have been harmoniously developed. Even in mature manhood and womanhood we may find it necessary to continue some of our disciplinary studies to prevent our intellectual life from degenerating. But no such wise and considerate care is given to the cultivation of the moral life, and yet men are troubled by their moral imperfections.

It may, I think, be assumed that, with rare exceptions, no man's environment has been favourable to the natural growth of *all* the virtues that should illustrate the Christian character. In some cases, the influences of a man's home, and school, and early friendships have been friendly to watchfulness, courage, industry and the more robust qualities of the moral life; in others, to gentleness, kindliness, patience, and courtesy. But I imagine that most of us discover, when we reach manhood or womanhood, that the soil in which we have been planted, and the climate which has been about us from our childhood, have been unfavourable to some very necessary virtues, and that these need careful cultivation. We should be thankful for whatever good qualities have come to us apart from our own choice and effort, and should do our best to develop the rest.

The power of sympathy may be cultivated. We may, by a definite effort of will, overcome the miserable tendency to think only of ourselves and our own affairs. We may put ourselves in the way of being troubled by other men's sorrows and gladdened by their joys. When we hear of a reverse of fortune which has come upon a friend, we may dwell upon it, and make it vivid and real to ourselves. We may think of all the details of the calamity; of the months of anxiety during which it has been anticipated; of the sleepless nights which our friend spent as the catastrophe came nearer; of the changes it has made in his whole position, and in all his prospects of the future; of what it must be for him to leave his pleasant home; to part with his pictures and books; to look at his garden for the last time; to feel that in future he will not be able to travel or to indulge in any of the recreations which have become almost necessary to his health and vigour; of his distress at having to take his girls from a school which is now much too expensive for his means, and at having to tell his boys that they must give up the hope of going to the university; of the anguish with which he anticipates what may come to them when he is dead, if he is unable to recover something of the wealth that he has lost; of the bitterness with which he thinks of the errors of judgment which may, perhaps, have led to the calamity—the rashness of some unfortunate speculation—the facility with which he granted large credits to men whom he ought never to have trusted. It is only by a deliberate effort to measure the magnitude of a great trouble, and to realize some of the innumerable elements of misery in it, that some of us can ever come to feel adequate sympathy with it. And a similar effort is necessary to sympathise perfectly with any great happiness.

But self-discipline is not enough. The want of sympathy should be confessed as a sin, and we should pray God to pardon it and to give us grace to overcome it. Above all, we should remember that in Christ all perfection is possible to us. His life is our life; we are branches of the great Vine; and whatever grace or beauty appeared in His character may appear in our own. If we abide in Him we may come to have that sensitiveness to suffering which moved Him to compassion when He saw the blind, and the lame, and the leprous, and which made Him weep at the grave of Lazarus, though He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead; and we may come to have that sympathy with the common joys of men which prompted Him to change the water into wine at Cana of Galilee. The imitation of Christ is not impossible to any of us, for in the power of His Spirit all His perfections may become ours; and His deep and perfect sympathy with all the vicissitudes of human sadness and joy was among the fairest and noblest of His perfections.

IX.

THE GRACE OF CHRIST A LAW OF CONDUCT.

THERE is nothing so contagious as a great example. Christian morals have their root and inspiration in Christ Himself rather than in His isolated precepts. In every age men have been caught in the mighty currents of His infinite love for the human race, and have been swept away from the narrow interests of their personal life into the ocean of a boundless charity. The words of Tiburzio to Luria in Robert Browning's noble poem—words in which the Pisan general describes the worth to a nation of a man of heroic goodness—illustrate the philosophy of Christian morals :—

> "A people is but the attempt of many
> To rise to the completer life of one ;
> And those who live as models for the mass
> Are singly of more value than they all.
> Such man are you, and such a time is this,
> That your sole fate concerns a nation more
> Than its apparent welfare."

For eighteen hundred years the Christian Church has found its unity, its vigour, all its hope and all its glory, in "the attempt of many to rise to the completer life," of Him who revealed at once the righteousness and love of God, and the true ideal of human perfection.

Men need not wonder that we care so much for the great truth that Christ was the eternal Son of God, who at the impulse of an infinite love descended from Divine heights to the infirmities and sorrows and temptations of the common life of mankind. There are great religious reasons which invest this truth with infinite importance; but it also lies at the foundation of Christian morals. Let the descent of Christ from His eternal throne for our sakes be denied, doubted, forgotten, and the world loses the springs of a moral inspiration which renders possible the most generous forms of goodness. For what we all need is, not merely a clear knowledge of duty, but that vigour of moral purpose, that intensity of moral enthusiasm which will not merely enable us to master temptations to indolence and selfishness, but which will raise us to lofty moral levels where these temptations will not be able to assault us.

The story of one man's heroism makes a thousand heroes. The story of the Grace of Christ who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich, has filled the heart of Christendom with floods of compassion for human want and pain and misery. It has built thousands of hospitals for the sick, thousands of asylums for the aged, for orphans, for those who have been suffering from every description of misfortune and desolation. It has constrained millions of unknown men and women who were poor themselves to become still poorer, in order to relieve the greater wretchedness of others. If ever I lose heart when I think of the magnitude of the claims of the friendless, the desolate, the oppressed, on the help and service of those who are happier than themselves —if I begin to fear that men will be too selfish to discharge obligations so immense, and demanding such enormous self-sacrifice—my courage returns when I think of Christ. I know that the story of His grace will continue to inspire the hearts of men through future centuries, as it has inspired them in centuries gone by. I see that, notwithstanding the intellectual confusions by which we are environed, it is exerting a greater power on the moral life of the race at the present moment than it has ever exerted before. I believe that the will of God which received so noble an expression in the incarnation, the miracles, the sufferings, and the death of Christ will at last be done on earth even as it is done in heaven.

The Grace of Christ is to be a law of Christian conduct. Grace transcends love. For in loving others we may be only meeting their claims upon us; and Grace passes beyond all claims. It does more than fulfil the law. It accepts sacrifices which the law could not impose; it confers benefits which the law could not award.

Paul, after his manner, made the Grace of Christ a reason for Christian generosity. The Christians in

Jerusalem and its neighbourhood were suffering from great poverty; and he asked the Churches in remote heathen cities to contribute towards their relief. Although the Jewish Christians had not shown a brotherly spirit to himself or to those whom he had converted from heathenism, he might have obtained help for them by appealing to the common human sympathies of his Gentile converts. The sense of Christian brotherhood, affectionate veneration for the Church of Jerusalem, many of the members of which had been the personal friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, might have strengthened natural pity for human suffering, and led the converts to the Christian faith at Corinth and elsewhere to respond to his appeal. But to give fire and energy to their generosity, he reminded them of the most glorious and sublime manifestation of the Divine love for the human race. Christ was rich and for our sakes became poor. The infinite Grace revealed in the incarnation is to be revealed in Christian conduct. The mind that was in Christ is to be in us; and therefore the Christians at Corinth were to send money to relieve their Christian brethren in Jerusalem and Judæa. They were to suffer loss that they might serve others.

We have better wealth—all of us—than money; and the voluntary poverty of Christ for our sakes is to have far more important effects on character and conduct than the creation of a disposition to give money for the relief of poverty and suffering. There is a selfishness of a more subtle kind than that which makes us keep a tight hand on our silver and gold The giving of money may be the discipline of a loftier kind of generosity; but in some cases it seems to be made a substitute for the nobler service. It was not mere money that Christ gave when He became poor to enrich the human race; and if the power of His example and of His spirit rests upon us we shall give, and give freely, what we value infinitely more than money. It is a law of the Christian life that we should impoverish ourselves in many ways to enrich other men.

What, then, is our wealth—the wealth we care for most?

There are some to whom the refined and gracious habits of a cultivated life are far more precious than gold. They were fortunate in being born of intelligent and gentle parents. They received an education which not only informed and disciplined their mind, but which preserved and confirmed the traditions of their home. They are offended and pained by coarseness of nature and roughness of speech, as the ear of a musician is offended and pained by a voice out of tune, or the eye of a painter by bad drawing and harsh contrasts of colour. The delicacy, purity, and refinement of nature which came to them by the felicity of their birth and early training are not to be bought with money, and are not always transmitted with inherited wealth. Rich men may purchase luxury and splendour, and may fill their houses with the beautiful creations of art; but that nameless, indefinable grace of which I am speaking is not sold in any market, and those who possess it are conscious of its absence in the vulgar rich as well as in the vulgar poor. It is a distinction which, if they could, they would not sell for all "the wealth of Ormuzd or of Ind." How are they to make the Grace of Christ a law of conduct?

I have known educated and refined Christian women who have made friends, not merely of the gentle poor, but of those who had been born in rough homes, who had been always surrounded by rough people, and who, not by their fault but by their misfortune, were rough themselves. It would have been much pleasanter to these Christian women to spend all their leisure with people of another kind. To men and women of a refined nature, living in refined homes, the wealth of life consists largely in the advantage and happiness of congenial society. There is a loss of enjoyment, and of something more than enjoyment, in intimate association with persons whose minds have never been cultivated, whose moral tastes are coarse, whose manners are ungentle. And it is one of the most beautiful and effective ways of imitating Christ to accept this voluntary poverty for His sake, to part with the wealth which we most value for the sake of enriching those who are wholly destitute of it.

It seems to be thought that rough uncultivated men and women, if only they want to do good, are likely to be of more service than the refined and educated to people who are coarse and ignorant. Thank God, it is possible for everybody that really cares for others to do them good; and it is wonderful how much good may be done by those whose knowledge is very small, whose powers are very limited, and whose education has been altogether neglected. But those who have been more fortunate have within their reach an exceptional kind of service. Let me illustrate what I mean.

Societies have been formed in several parts of England for diffusing a delight in beauty among those whose lives are environed by unlovely conditions. They give concerts of good music in the poorer parts of great towns; they cover with pleasant decoration the bare and hideous walls of school-rooms, and mission-rooms, and private houses; they send bright flowers for people living in close and gloomy courts to put on their window-sills. The Kyrle Societies seem to me to be doing a very kindly service. But the noblest works of art are not in marble or on canvas; the loveliest music is not heard at concerts or the Opera; and there is something fairer than any flower that ever blossomed under southern skies. In a cultivated, refined and gracious man or woman there is a charm, a spell, a beauty of a diviner order. Take the brightness, the music, the perfume of your gentle and delicate life into the homes of people who are coarse in their habits, and whose words are rude; sit down with them as a brother or a sister; talk to them, remembering that they, too, are God's children, that perhaps they are trying to do His will as far as they know it, and that at last He may receive them home with words of welcome and joy. To them your life is a song, let them listen to it; a poem, let them read it; a picture, let them see its form and colour; a flower, for a little time let the brightness and the sweetness of it be theirs. Make your visit to them as charming as possible. Let me ask the ladies who may read these pages not to put on their plainest and shabbiest dresses when they go into their "districts." If the weather is fine wear a pretty dress, a dainty bonnet, and gloves of which you would not be ashamed when you visit your friends. If you must wear out dresses which are a little dingy, let them be worn when at the houses of rich people, who see bright, pretty things every day. Be courteous to the poor, and make your visit delightful to them.

It is not always pleasant work. You will have to breathe an ungenial atmosphere; and as the plants when transferred from your gardens and green-houses to the narrow street and the close court, where the air is foul with smoke, are conscious that their very life is touched, so you with your delicate ways will be conscious of a certain pain and loss. But how are these brothers and sisters of ours to be led to higher levels of life except by service of this kind? And the service will lead you into a deeper knowledge of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. A morning spent among the poor and the miserable will sometimes teach you more about Christ than many mornings spent in church—will give you a clearer, closer vision of His love for us, and will enable you to trust in His love with a firmer and happier confidence.

There is another way in which many of us may fulfil the law of Christ. Whether we are rich or poor, cultivated or uncultivated, our pleasant friends are among our most precious wealth. I mean the friends who exhilarate us, increase our courage, reinforce our strength when we are tired of life, and soothe and quiet us when we are restless and agitated. Most of us know people of a different sort; people who, not intentionally, but under the influence of some evil fate, always remember the things which it would be pleasant to forget, and always speak of the things about which we wish they would be silent; people who have a talent for misery—who are miserable themselves and make other people miserable; who when the sun is rising and filling the east with the fresh pure light of the dawn look westwards, where the heavy clouds of night are still hanging in funereal gloom, and who when the west is burning with the gorgeous splendours of sunset look eastwards where the grey twilight is ascending like the shadowy ghost of the departed day. They always walk on the shady side of the street. Their life is an arctic winter without even an arctic summer, for when they have had six months of darkness at the north pole, instead of taking the six months of pale sunlight which follow, they escape to the south pole to get another six months of darkness there.

People of this kind are to be found among those who have wealth as well as among those who have none; wherever they are found they are really the most destitute and miserable of mankind. But perhaps the destitute and miserable rich are the more pitiable. They have luxurious dinners, but their intellect and heart are starved; they have company at their table, but they are without friends; they have music about them, but no music in their hearts; pictures on their walls, but no forms of beauty in their fancy, no golden splendour, no romance, no mystery, no grace.

They are in want of something that it is harder to give them than money, of something that is more scarce even in the worst times, of something that we are more reluctant to part with. We must carry our own light and fire into their darkness and cold. There must be a real impoverishment of ourselves if we are to enrich them. We must lose part of our own vital force if we are to endure, even for a little while, the chill and the gloom in which they are always living; we must burn up some of the fuel which might keep ourselves warm to give them warmth; we must be fretted by their fretfulness, and depressed by their depression. There is a conscious loss of life when we are in contact with them. Virtue goes out of us at their touch. To be with them for an hour lowers our intellectual and moral temperature. But to submit to this loss in order to cheer and to animate them, is to accept the grace of Christ as a law of conduct.

We must impoverish ourselves in other ways if we are to imitate our Lord. To some people—and the number increases every year—delight in intellectual pursuits, in science, in art, in literature, is one of the most precious of all kinds of wealth. An additional five per cent. on their investments gives some men less happiness than the effort to master some new department of science; a diamond necklace gives some women less happiness than a new and noble poem. I sometimes wonder whether intellectual covetousness will be as unfriendly to zeal in the public service and in the work which, by way of distinction, we call religious, as covetousness of a baser sort. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Covetousness of all kinds is idolatry. Some men who have to pay a very light income-tax are in just as much danger from their "riches" as men who have to return their income in five figures. Even those of us who are far enough from having anything that can be described as intellectual wealth are not safe.

I should like to illustrate this danger; but in a kindly notice of a volume which I published a year or two ago, the writer complained that my illustrations were "provincial." The complaint was a just one. Human life, as I know it, is the life of Birmingham manufacturers, merchants, and tradesmen, and of Birmingham working-people who work in iron, and brass, and tin, who make pens, and guns, and jewellery, hardware of all sorts, and beautiful things in silver and gold. When I think of human life I think of it in the forms which it assumes among the people with whom I have lived for more than thirty years. I think of the troubles and temptations which come to them in their trade, and of their keen interest in public affairs. And if I am to illustrate the dangers of intellectual covetousness I cannot illustrate them from the life of literary or fashionable people in London, or from the life of ladies and gentlemen living in pleasant country houses. I must take the material which lies under my hand. *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.*

For a man who has a keen delight in literature, and who can snatch only an hour or two now and then for reading, it is not a pleasant thing on a winter's evening, when he happens to be at leisure, and when he might have two or three hours of perfect happiness with a poet, with an historian, with some master of philosophy, or with some charming essayist—it is not, I say, a pleasant thing for him to leave his warm room and his books, and to walk a mile or two through the damp and cold, to be present at a meeting of the "eight hundred," or to speak for a municipal candidate in a noisy Ward meeting, or to attend a Ward committee. It is not a pleasant thing for such a man to give a couple of hours to a hospital meeting in the morning, or two or three hours to a meeting of the School Board in the afternoon, knowing that after dinner he will be obliged to work off the business letters of the day, instead of being free to read some delightful book on the history of Art. For a Sunday-school teacher to give up an evening every week for the preparation of his lessons instead of attending a class in some science in which he is interested, for the conductor of a Band of Hope to make a similar sacrifice, requires a real and vigorous moral effort.

In the case of hundreds and thousands of us, in every part of the country, one public claim after another interferes with intellectual cultivation. We miss the opportunity of adding to our knowledge; we lose what we once knew. We are humbled when we are with men and women who have not been called to the service which we have endeavoured to render to others, or who have declined it, and who have been able to accumulate an intellectual wealth which is in vivid contrast to our own poverty. Perhaps we think that our native powers were not inferior to theirs, that we had an equal passion for intellectual achievement, and are capable of an equal industry. If it happens that they assume airs of superiority, it is hardly possible for us not to resent the assumption, although in our better moments we are conscious that their superiority is indisputable, and that their intellectual resources are really larger and more varied than our own. But that is a noble poverty which comes upon men as the result of the free and voluntary service which they have rendered to the ignorant, the suffering, and the wretched—to their town, to their country, and to the Christian Church. It involves no disgrace. The poverty is real; there is folly in the refusal to recognise it; but it is a poverty which brings us into closer fellowship with Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich.

I do not mean that young men and women should let the golden years of youth slip by without a serious attempt to carry on the studies which were only begun at school, and to acquire some knowledge of the glorious literature which is the noble inheritance of all Englishmen. For the sake of doing more effective work in future years, as well as for the sake of their own intellectual cultivation, they ought to avail themselves of those means of intellectual improvement which are within their reach. But there is a point—every one must determine it for himself—at which the claims of our own intellect must give place to the claims of human want and misery. We must consent to be intellectually impoverished ourselves for the sake of increasing the wealth of other men.

The law extends to a still higher province of human life. It requires us to sacrifice religious advantages for the sake of others. There may be a certain selfishness in the hunger for religious knowledge and religious enjoyment, as well as in the cultivation of the intellect, in the pursuit of social pleasures, and in dealing with money. Whatever may be said about the worthlessness of sermons, and the dulness of public worship, there are large numbers of people who listen to preaching with keen interest, and to whom the sermons and worship of Sunday are the strength and joy of life. But their true place on Sunday may not always be at church, but at the bedside of a parent, a child, a friend, a man that works with them in the same warehouse, or a neighbour living in the same street. If they make the grace of Christ the law of conduct they may have to watch by the sick when they would like to be worshipping God. Or, perhaps, their true place is with some aged person, weary of the monotony of living week after week in the same room, and weary of almost unbroken solitude; or, perhaps, with husbands, brothers, wives, of whom they can see little during the week, who will not come with them to worship, whose affection they are losing and whose happiness they are marring, while enriching their own religious life. Every one must judge for himself.

Or perhaps they could give more to others by mission work, or school work, on Sunday evenings than they could gain for themselves by listening to sermons and joining in prayer and song. The work involves a real loss to those who engage in it—a loss of religious knowledge and of the religious refreshment which would make life easier and brighter.

But if the sacrifice is made under the inspiration of a desire to serve others, it is a part of that imitation of Christ which is the law of the Christian life.

Of the more heroic forms in which the law is illustrated—of the courage and self-devotion of those who, at the impulse of love for Christ and mankind, leave home and country and friends, the refinements and the intellectual excitements of civilized life, the noble virtues and the sacred purity of Christian society, in order to live among heathen and barbarous people, I will say nothing. They have heard a divine voice ; they know the secret of the voluntary poverty of Christ as I cannot know it. But to the imitation of Christ all Christian people are called ; and in all human conditions it is possible to translate into conduct the law of Christian perfection. It is not merely in the virtues of His human life—this is the point of my paper—that Christ is our example. According to the measures of our strength we are to imitate the infinite grace which, for our sake, brought Him from heights of divine majesty to the weakness, the poverty, and the suffering which had become the inheritance of the human race. In His incarnation He has given us an example that we should walk in His steps.

X

ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

IT is a common complaint that the morals of those who profess to be governed by the laws of Christ are not exceptionally noble and generous, and that the differences between the Church and the world are, for the most part, merely technical and artificial. The charge is often grossly exaggerated, but there is too much truth in it.

One reason is to be found in the want of Christian orthodoxy among those who profess to be orthodox Christians. Between right thinking and right practice, Christian faith and Christian conduct, there are the closest and most vital relations. Now it is one of the chief elements of Christian orthodoxy to recognise the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ over every province of human life. We profess to concede His claims. We say that all heresy has its roots in revolt against His authority. And yet we tamper with His plainest words. We pass some of them over as being inapplicable to the conditions of modern life. We assume that they may be disregarded without guilt.

"Be not anxious for the morrow: for the morrow shall be anxious for itself." These words are just as authoritative for all Christians as the Ten Commandments were for the Jews. The Jews were not to work on the Sabbath; *we* are not to be "anxious, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But I suppose that many excellent Christians think that whatever the words may have meant eighteen hundred years ago, they mean very little or nothing now.

There are some great laws which we know are authoritative. We must not lie. We must not steal. We must not get drunk. We must not permit ourselves to be mastered by revengeful passion. We should be tortured with self-reproach if we committed any of these offences. If a man we knew was guilty of lying, theft, drunkenness, malignity, we should regard his profession of religious earnestness as hypocritical. He might, indeed, lie once, under the stress of strong temptation; or he might get drunk once, in an hour of excitement and thoughtlessness, without wrecking our confidence in him; but if the offence was repeated we should lose all faith in his religious sincerity.

We do not apply the same rule to transgressions of many of Christ's precepts. Men go on breaking them all their lives; and though we may be sorry for them, it does not occur to us that their disobedience is inconsistent with their Christian integrity. We break them ourselves, break them constantly, and yet never ask whether this revolt against Christ's authority is consistent with Christian Faith.

I have on my shelves two folio volumes containing a collection of English ecclesiastical laws. The editor, Bishop Gibson, has printed in black-letter the laws which are no longer in force; which have been repealed, or which have become obsolete. It would be convenient, it would be very instructive, if some competent editor were to prepare an edition of the New Testament on the same principle; distinguishing between those laws which are regarded by the Church as still in force, and those which are regarded as obsolescent, or silently repealed by change of circumstances or lapse of time. I am afraid that he would have to print in black-letter very many of Christ's precepts; this among the number: "Be not anxious for the morrow."

And yet it is a very practical precept and a very reasonable one. It is a precept which if we received it heartily into our moral code and tried to keep it, would add very much to our effective strength and lift from our shoulders some of the burdens by which we are crushed.

For a great part, perhaps the greater part, of the misery of the human race comes, not from the actual presence of trouble, but from the dread of it. Very often our fears enormously exaggerate the real evils by which we are threatened: very often we are haunted by fears which are altogether imaginary. Apart from the distress which is occasioned by the apprehension of definite troubles, strength is worn, peace destroyed, happiness ruined, by vague anxieties about possible sorrows. The lives of men are shortened, not so much by hard work as by incessant and unnecessary worry.

No class of the community appears to be exempt from this curse. Even the kind of anxiety which our Lord was specially condemning—anxiety about the means of living—extends through all ranks and follows men through all changes of condition. A working-man thinks that with an increase of five or ten shillings a week in his wages he would be released from all care; the increase comes, and he is anxious still. His income is doubled, and he is sometimes more anxious than ever. Men look at people whose resources are much larger than their own, and envy them; but talk to those who seem fortunate and prosperous, and sometimes you will find that they are just as restless about the future as the men that envy them. The more they have the more they can lose. As their property extends it is in danger at more numerous points. Many rich men seem to be as constantly haunted by care as the poor.

It has always been so. Two thousand years ago men dreaded poverty, sickness, bereavement, loss of honour, loss of power, just as they dread these calamities to-day. The moralists of antiquity attempted to discover a remedy for the universal evil. Some of them thought that the remedy was to be found in a frank and courageous acceptance of the obvious fact that the future is beyond our power, and that true wisdom, therefore, lies in enjoying the present. We may lose our property to-morrow, but it is ours to-day; we may have to suffer pain to-morrow, but we are at ease to-day; our children may be struck for death to-morrow, but to-day their eyes are bright, and their laughter musical, and the sunshine of our lives is unclouded. The wise man will seize the day as it passes, enjoy its pleasures, and wait for the troubles of the future till they come. Stoicism struck a loftier note. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius told men that the things which are not in our own power are neither good nor evil. Poverty and wealth are the mere accidents of life: if a man becomes poor he himself is no worse; if he becomes rich he himself is no better; and it is the same with pain and ease, honour and shame. What a man should care for is that which is really a part of his own life and under his own control. It is always in our power to be just, courageous, temperate. Virtue is not the sport of Fortune. Whoever is virtuous secures the substantial good of life: all else the wise man regards with indifference.

That is a noble doctrine. It contains much more than half the truth. When the evils of life are remote it fills the heart with enthusiasm; we think that it will enable us to meet and to bear the worst sorrows; but when troubles are actually upon us we exclaim, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

Christ was no Stoic. He never told His disciples that their inheritance in the eternal glories of the Divine kingdom should make them insensible to common troubles. He never said that the common sufferings of the race are not real evils. His feet were always on the solid earth, and His teaching, even when it seems most ideal, has its roots in the realities of human life. He had become flesh, and He was in immediate contact with the rudest, coarsest, most homely facts of common experience. He knew that thirst is a real pain, even though a man has the vision of God and the hope of an immortality of blessedness. He knew that it is a bad thing to be starved, whatever consolation a starving man may find in the Divine love. He knew that frost and snow and the cruel east wind, if we are unprotected against them by warm clothing, are real evils to the saint as well as to the sinner.

Christ does not say that the wise man should be insensible to hunger, thirst, and want of shelter against rain and cold ; that we should regard it as a matter of indifference whether we have anything to eat, drink, and to put on. He says the precise opposite of this. He says that God knows that we have need of all these things. Nothing could be more remote from a visionary and impossible Stoicism. He confirms and sanctions by an appeal to the authority of the eternal God the cravings of hunger and thirst, and the demands of the sensitive body for protection and warmth. He to whom the pains and pleasures of our mortal life must seem so transient and so brief, knows that we need the supplies of our physical wants.

It would have been fanaticism if our Lord had said that His disciples were to give up working, and to depend for food and clothing on the providence of God; but He did not say that. The birds of the air do not sow or reap or gather into barns; but Christ does not tell us that we are to follow their example and to leave our fields unploughed, or to let the wheat rot on the ground in harvest time, relying on God to feed us with bread from heaven. The lilies of the Syrian fields are clothed with a beauty beyond that of the robes of kings; but there is not a word to intimate that the followers of Christ are to leave their looms idle, and to expect angels to bring them garments of celestial tissue and shining with celestial splendour.

What Christ does say is that to make riches our master and to spend life in getting the means of living is inconsistent with living for God; that to be absorbed in anxiety about food and clothing is to forget that there is a Providence which feeds the birds and makes the flowers beautiful, and that we are of much greater worth in God's sight than they are; that this anxiety is useless, for though we can do a great deal by work, we can do nothing by worry; that the Gentiles—the heathen—may be anxious about what they are to eat and to drink, and about wherewithal they are to be clothed;

but that we who know that we have a Father in heaven should be free from sordid care, and should set our hearts upon God's kingdom and the righteousness of God; that we may be sure that we shall receive from God all necessary things; that the anxiety of to-day will not lighten the burden of to-morrow, and that every day brings with it its full share of trouble and danger; the evil of to-day is sufficient for to-day.

I have spoken of these words as if they were a law: it would be more just to describe them as a gospel—Christ's Gospel for those who are worried with incessant cares about the common necessities of life—Christ's Gospel for those whose strength is worn and whose hearts are wearied by any great anxiety about the future. His Gospel would be incomplete if it contained no message for those who are suffering from these great evils. For Christ claims authority over the whole of human life, and it is one of the initial assumptions of the Christian Faith that His grace extends beyond the limits of His law. There is no precept of Christ's that is not heralded by a promise; every revelation of human duty rests upon a still larger revelation of Divine love. The commandments which God has given us through Him are "exceeding broad;" the grace is broader still.

It is a melancholy consideration that after the Gospel has been in the world for more than eighteen hundred years a large part of it remains unknown. Men think that Christ has much to say about the next world, but that He has very little to say about this. The Gospel, so they feel, is foreign to the interests which are nearest to us and most urgent; it relates to unseen and eternal worlds. There is no great need to think of it till the joys and duties of this life are exhausted and the supreme mystery of Death is at hand.

And yet Christ—shall I say?—took a great deal of trouble to give a wholly different impression of His mission. It is very natural for us to think that religion concerns Eternity and not Time; that the Infinite God can care nothing about our poverty, hunger, pain; and that He must care everything about our thoughts of Himself, our worship, our loyalty, obedience, and trust. But a great part of Christ's brief ministry was spent in healing disease, in giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb; and these miracles are a revelation to every age. If we learnt the Gospel at first hand the impression that Christ has nothing to do with our common human experiences would be impossible.

The precept forbidding anxiety about to-morrow is one of the ways in which Christ reveals the Fatherhood of God. He tells us that we are to live as children; that God cares for us; that we can perfectly trust the love, the wisdom, the power of our Father in heaven. Look at a child and see the difference between its life and the life of its parents It needs food and clothing and a home; but the planning and scheming and labour to provide for the child's wants belong to its father and mother. A child is suffering from illness; it shrinks from pain; but the father and mother have anxieties about the illness of which the child knows nothing. They watch the changing symptoms; they endeavour to follow the directions of the doctor; there is forethought in the evening about what will be wanted in the night; there is consideration about what must be done for the child when health begins to return. And Christ tells us that we are to live as children. We may have to suffer; we are obliged to work; but the anxiety is to be left to God. "Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

This is not only a part of the Christian Gospel; it is a very important part. It is not enough to believe that we have sinned against God, and that Christ came into the world that our sins might be forgiven and that we might have eternal life and eternal righteousness. Do we also believe that God knows that we have need of food and clothing, a roof to shelter us from rain and storm, and a hundred other things that contribute to physical health and vigour? Do we believe that we may trust in God for these things as well as for the knowledge of Himself, peace of heart, wisdom, courage, and strength to keep His commandments? Or do we think that our physical wants are beneath God's notice and that He regards them with indifference? If so, we believe only part of the Gospel; and the part we believe will be largely deprived of its power by our rejection of the rest.

For, however unimportant we may suppose our physical wants must appear to God, they are very important to us. If we begin by thinking that they lie below the reach of God's providence we shall be very anxious about them ourselves. "The care of the world" will choke the seed sown by the Son of Man, and the Divine word will be unfruitful. I suppose that many people are "lost," in the awful sense in which the word is used by the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have never come to believe the Gospel which underlies our Lord's precepts against anxiety about to-morrow.

Christ's teaching carries with it the assurance that in some way or another God will provide that the common blessings of this life shall reach us, unless there is some good reason why they should not.

"Unless": but does not this spoil all? If we had an unqualified assurance that God would give us them, this would be a gospel indeed; but to be told that there may be a good reason why He should not give them is to throw us back on the common-places of an optimistic philosophy. For my part, I am not an optimist. This is not the best of all possible worlds. If all men were just, truthful, temperate, kindly, industrious, provident, it would be a very much better world. It is not God alone that has had the shaping of the conditions of human life and the history of mankind. He has called us into fellowship or partnership with Himself, and our share of the work has been done very badly. Whenever we pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven, we imply that at present His will is in many ways obstructed and defeated.

But Christ has taught us that God is our Father, and we rob the name of its meaning if we suppose that God regards our perils with an ineffectual alarm and our miseries with an impotent pity. Kings are related to their subjects through general laws; the relations of fathers to their children are direct, personal, individual. It is mere mockery to tell us that our Father knows that we have need of food and drink and clothing if He is so fettered by what we describe as the general laws of His administration that He is unable to supply them. His knowledge that we need them gives no comfort, inspires no trust, relieves no anxiety. The most useless of our friends has the same knowledge. Christ means us to believe that God will help us.

"Unless there is some good reason" why He should not. He may sometimes see good reason for permitting us to suffer from other men's sins and follies or from our own. He may sometimes see good reason for permitting us to suffer harm from accidental causes or from storms, or floods, or earthquakes, fierce heat, or malignant winds. But when He does, it should be an infinite relief to be assured that He not only knows our trouble but would have averted it had it not been, on the whole, better that we should suffer than that we should be delivered from suffering.

It may be thought that Christ's revelation of God's interest in our physical wants, though a source of comfort, has no close relation to morals. But His words take the form of a precept, not of a promise: "Be not anxious for your life . . . nor yet for your body . . . Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? . . . Be not anxious for the morrow." Trust in God is a large element of Christian perfection. Nor is this all. Christ enables us to keep some of His commandments by giving us another commandment to keep. If we were not eager and anxious about food, drink, clothing, we should be placed beyond the reach of many fatal temptations. It is this eagerness that makes us irritable, mean, hard, ungenerous. It is this anxiety which exposes us to temptations which assault our moral integrity and which sometimes end in moral disaster and ruin. Christ saves men from lying, selfishness, dishonesty, by telling them to cast their care on God. We break this commandment and, therefore, we break many others.

In modern Christian thought there are two tendencies which are wholly irreconcilable; sooner or later one of them must be mastered by the other.

As yet it may seem hard to prophesy which will be victorious.

On the one hand it is thought incredible that God should interfere to shelter us from physical harm and to supply our physical wants. Excellent Christian people shrink from asking God for any blessings that will lessen the gloom or add to the brightness of their earthly life. 'Health and strength are determined 'by general laws; they are to be secured by temper- 'ance, by exercise, by breathing pure air, by attention 'to all that science has discovered concerning the causes 'of disease. Success in business—this is not a matter 'which a Christian man has a right to pray for; it 'depends partly on skill, capital, and industry; partly 'on circumstances which are beyond our own control, 'and with which God will not interfere. We may 'rely upon God's defence and guidance in the higher 'regions of life; but in its inferior provinces we are 'left to do our best without any Divine assistance; 'in these we are in contact with general laws and can 'find no trace of a living, personal God.'

On the other hand, it is one of the deepest convictions of our times that unless religious faith is good for a great deal in common life, it is good for nothing. We are told to find God—not in creeds merely, or in sacred books, or in sacraments, or in prayers, or in the miracles of remote ages, or in visions of glory beyond death, but in the counting-house, the manufactory, and the consulting-room, in the laboratory, and in Parliament, wherever human hands are working, wherever human hearts are suffering: a faith that does not fill this world with God as well as worlds unseen is unreal and worthless.

But if we are to recognise the authority of the Personal God in our common life, we must also recognise His care. Wherever God is present to rule He is also present to help. If we never speak to God about our business, our business will soon cease to be a Divine vocation and a Divine service. Whatever lies beyond the reach of prayer, lies beyond the boundaries of religious duty. We have to make our choice between these conflicting tendencies. To give religious faith its true place in common life, we must accept all Christ's teaching, and not a part of it merely; and we must learn all that He meant concerning God's relations to the transient sorrows and joys of this world when He said, "Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

XI.

FAMILY LIFE.[1]

ABOUT the infancy and childhood of the Lord Jesus Christ the writers of the four Gospels are almost silent.

For a long time this reticence of the four evangelists controlled the thought and spirit of the Christian Church. Our Lord's sacrifice for the sin of the world, His victory over death, were the central and most absorbing objects of early Christian devotion. Of the festival of Christmas we find no trace till about three hundred years after the Crucifixion. The festivals of the early Church were the Lord's Supper, which commemorated His death as a sacrifice for sin, and the First day of the week, which commemorated His Resurrection.

How soon painters began to delight in those representations of the Virgin and Child and of the Holy Family, which are now to be found in such endless numbers on the walls of all the picture galleries of Europe, I do not know. Perhaps they were suggested by the tendency which ultimately led to the enthronement of the mother of our Lord in a dignity which she would have repelled with dismay and abhorrence; they have certainly encouraged and strengthened the idolatrous homage with which she has been regarded for many centuries. In the childhood of our Lord, Mary was His protector, defender, and ruler. To her belonged authority, and to Him submission. I suspect that artists have done as much as theologians to teach millions of men that her dignity is permanent, and that the surest method of securing the grace of Christ is to appeal to the tenderness of His mother.

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[1] This paper was written for Christmas Day.

In another way art has misled the imagination of the Church, and by misleading its imagination has inflicted the gravest injury on its spiritual life. The kind of affection with which we regard a child is not the kind of affection which we should cherish for Him who is the Prince of the human race, the Judge of men, and who, even during the years of His humiliation, gave laws which have authority for all mankind and promises which are the solace and the support both of penitents and saints. The four evangelists—even those of them who tell the story of His birth—are careful not to place Him vividly before us until He has reached the maturity of His strength and is armed with the power which stilled the storm and raised the dead.

And yet it is true that He was once a child, and was subject to the authority of Joseph and Mary. It is also true that even after He reached manhood He continued to walk for some years in the quiet paths of life. The moral perfections of God were translated into those unostentatious virtues which constitute the dignity and the happiness of a human home. Within the narrow limits of the Family the Lord Jesus Christ revealed the glory of the Divine righteousness and the Divine love.

What was large enough for Christ during thirty years of His earthly history must surely be large enough for most of us. There are men and women who resent the mean and poor conditions under which they have to do the will of God, and who dream of what they might achieve if they had ampler space for their activities. They have not room enough—so they think—to be very good. They have it in their hearts to show a regal compassion to the miserable, and heroic chivalry and courage in the vindication of the oppressed. But for regal virtues they think that regal resources are necessary; and they suppose that heroic circumstances are necessary for the manifestation of the heroic spirit. It may be well for them to remember on Christmas Day, that for thirty years Christ lived a divinely perfect life within the walls of a peasant's home, and that in the trade of a carpenter and in His relations to His friends and neighbours in an obscure town among the hills of Galilee, He was able to show a glorious fidelity to the eternal laws of righteousness.

For all of us our life at home must constitute a great part of that life in which, by patient continuance in well-doing, we have to seek for glory, honour, and immortality; for many of us it practically constitutes the whole. There are millions of women millions of girls, to say nothing of little children, who have no life worth speaking of beyond the boundaries of the family. Whatever fidelity to God, whatever love for Christ, whatever justice, whatever kindness, generosity and gentleness they are to illustrate in their spirit and conduct, must be illustrated there. And even men who have their business and their profession to follow during the greater part of the day find occasion in their home-life for forms of well-doing and ill-doing that are not possible elsewhere. I like a broad and rich life for myself—full of varied interests; and I should like to see the lives of most men, and of most women too, animated by the inspiration, and refreshed by the free air, of activities and interests outside their own home. But no shining achievements elsewhere can palliate the guilt of coldness, injustice, ill-temper in the family; and the noblest public virtues have their roots in the gentleness, the industry, the self-sacrifice, and the truthfulness, of which only those who are nearest to us have any knowledge.

And so on Christmas morning it will be well to ask ourselves whether the obscure duties which lie nearest to us—duties with which for thirty years Christ was perfectly content—are being faithfully discharged. Are there none at home to whom we could be more just—in whom we could repose a more generous confidence—whom we could cherish with a warmer affection—who claim from us a more patient forbearance? If we are parents, is our authority exercised at once with firmness and consideration? If children, do we yield a frank and cheerful obedience? Whatever we are, do we find at home occasions for showing that sympathy with sorrow and with joy, which heightens the happiness of the happy and almost charms away the grief of the sad? What are the burdens which our strength might enable those nearest to us to bear more easily? What are the anxieties which our thoughtfulness and care might diminish?

It is almost inevitable that I should quote the well-known verses of Keble:—

"We need not bid for cloistered cell
Our neighbour and our work farewell;
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For mortal man beneath the sky.

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask:
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

The verses are excellent in their way, and, as I have said, it was almost inevitable that I should quote them. But in their soft music there is, perhaps, a false note; perhaps, indeed, there are two false notes.

For Keble suggests that we need not go to the cloister, because home affords all that the cloister can give

But home affords *more*—immeasurably more—than the cloister can give: the opportunities for a more varied virtue, for a richer and fuller perfection. And the second false note is the natural sequence of the first. Home is sufficient for us, Keble says, because it will furnish "room to *deny* ourselves." No doubt. But I should be very sorry for the people that I live with to discharge their home duties in the spirit of martyrs. God preserve us all from wives, husbands, children, brothers, and sisters, who go about the house with an air of celestial resignation! There are homes in which I think I have caught a glimpse of people of that kind. They perform every duty with a faultless exactness, an exactness precise enough to irritate a saint. They submit with exemplary patience to every inconvenience, and are rather grateful than otherwise for the disappointments and vexations which sometimes disturb the smooth currents of life in the happiest families. But they regard the claims of others as affording opportunities for acts of self-denial which take the place of the hair-shirt and the fasting and the scourge of the monastic life, a penance to be endured for the discipline of their perfection.

The lines rest on a poor, mean, un-Christian conception of self-denial, which I cannot stay to discuss. They also set the home-life in a false key. Self-denial! This is not what we ought to think of in connection with wife or husband, parent or child, brother or sister; but the joy of affectionate and hearty service for others. It is no self-denial for a man to wear an old coat a little longer that his wife may have a new dress, or for a mother to go on wearing an old bonnet that one of her children may have a new pair of boots. Where there is the kind of love which ought to bind all hearts together in a home, the happiness of life comes from giving our own pleasant things to those who are dear to us.

I like Miss Waring's tone better than Keble's:—

"I ask thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And wipe the weeping eyes;
A heart at leisure from itself,
To sooth and sympathise.

"Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate;
A work of lowly love to do
For Him on whom I wait.

"I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none that ask denied;
A mind to blend with outward life,
While keeping at Thy side;
Content to fill a little space,
If Thou be glorified."

But even in these beautiful lines there is the absence of that healthy unconsciousness which is the strength and charm of goodness. The absence is natural; for the writer spent many years in a sick-room, and it was in broken health and while enduring suffering that she wrote the hymns which have contributed some of the sweetest and gentlest elements to the religious life of our times. On the whole I think that I like best the manly simplicity of Wordsworth's lines :—

> "God for His service needeth not proud work of human skill :
> They please Him best who labour most to do in peace His will ;
> So let us strive to live, and to our spirits will be given
> Such wings as when our Saviour calls shall bear us up to Heaven."

And it is in the discharge of the quiet duties of the family, in the unostentatious charities and the unromantic heroisms of the home, in the trifling services, rendered almost without thought, and received almost without recognition, that most of us have to do the will of God.

In the course of twelve months it is very possible that even in homes where every heart is loyal to righteousness and to God, the relations of one or another member of the family to the rest may have become so uneasy, that the ideal life has been almost lost. Negligences too slight to be named, too slight to be distinctly remembered, may have gradually created a sense of discomfort. In some cases there have been grave faults which have created great unhappiness. On Christmas Day, which is as much a festival of the Family as a festival of the Church, estrangements which have separated hearts that cling together notwithstanding estrangement should cease, and the ties which unite them should be drawn closer and firmer. It is the day of all the year for children to forget—if their parents have worried and vexed them; for parents to forget—if their children have been undutiful and ungrateful; for brothers and sisters to brush away the jealousies and resentments which have troubled their mutual confidence, and lessened or rather repressed their mutual affection; for husbands and wives to renew the romance of their courtship. There may be faults to forgive; of course there are; but you will never come to an agreement if you try to estimate how much wrong there has been on one side and how much on the other. The heart is a bad accountant; it was never yet able to draw up a balance-sheet that any impartial auditor would sign. Let by-gones be by-gones; kiss and have done with them.

I wonder whether it would be of the slightest use to say anything to those of my readers who are not yet detached from the homes into which they were born, but who are beginning to think that it would be pleasant to have homes of their own. I do not know whether more young people fall in love with each other—or think they do—at parties and balls in winter, or on the lawn-tennis ground and at picnics in summer; both seasons are severely fatal. The destiny of not a few of my younger readers will probably be decided within the next few weeks.

With an honourable girl—with an honourable man—an engagement carries with it something more than a few sunny months of courtship. After courtship comes marriage. After marriage comes the home. To describe the reasons which to some young people seem quite sufficient to justify them, first in flirting, and then in getting "engaged," would answer no good purpose. The reasons are too trivial, too flagrantly absurd, to bear putting into words, and I have no pleasure in mocking at human folly, especially when the folly is likely to lead to years of misery and shame.

But—putting aside the indirect manner in which writers address their readers—let me speak frankly to you as a friend to a friend. Let me ask you to consider what you must have in your future husband, in your future wife, to make it even tolerable to spend twenty or thirty or forty years together. I will not insist on the elements which are necessary to the romantic perfection of married life; for most of us are commonplace people and a life of romance is beyond our reach. There are some very commonplace things you ought to make sure of.

Good sound health is one thing; there are twenty grave reasons for insisting on it. Next to this I should put perfect truthfulness; the man who will lie to other people will lie to his wife; the girl who will lie to other people will lie to her husband. Next to truthfulness—temperance, industry, and courage Then, fortitude; that is the power to bear pain and trouble without whining. Then, unselfishness; for the selfish man, the selfish girl, though drawn out of selfishness in the early weeks of courtship, will settle back into it again when the wear and worry of life come on; some one has said, it is not so hard to get out of one's self—the difficulty is to keep out. Then you should look for sufficient good sense to save you from the misery of having to live with a fool. If you are loyal to Christ you will know without my telling you, that your life can never be blended into perfect unity with another, unless there is loyalty to Christ in the other life as well as in your own.

But loyalty to Christ does not imply the possession of all that is necessary for a happy and honourable marriage. A man may have a genuine faith in Christ and yet have very little sense, and so may a woman. There may be genuine faith and yet a constitutional indolence or cowardice, or irritability, or sullenness, or waywardness. When a man or a woman has religious faith these grave tendencies to moral evil will be resisted, but they are not always perfectly mastered, and they may make married life very miserable.

I said just now that most of us are commonplace people, and that a life of romance is out of our reach; but I believe in "falling in love." The imagination should be kindled and the heart touched; there should be enthusiasm and even romance in the happy months that precede marriage, and something of the enthusiasm and romance should remain to the very end of life, or else the home is wanting in its perfect happiness and grace. The wonderful charm which makes the wife more to the husband than all other women, and the husband more to the wife than all other men; this is necessary to a true marriage. But take my word for it, those plain, solid virtues of which I have spoken are indispensable to the security and happiness of a home; and it is a home that you are drifting to when you are drifting into love.

You would not like to live with a liar, with a thief, with a drunkard, for twenty years; or with an indolent person, or a coward, or a fool; with such a comrade you could not build up a noble and beautiful, or even a tolerable, home. And remember that men and women may have the roots of some of these vices in them and yet be extremely agreeable and good-looking, dress well and say very pretty and charming things. With some of these miserable vices there may be a warm heart, generous impulses, real kindliness. But where these vices exist—where the elements of them exist—you cannot make sure of honour, of happiness, of peace, of the continuance of mutual affection, or of mutual trust. In the absence of plain, solid virtues in the man or the woman you marry, you are building your home on the sand, not on the rock, and when the winds rise and the waters are out, it will go badly with you.

If you ask me what is to become of the men and the women who do not possess these very plain excellences, I can only say that it would be a very happy thing if no one consented to marry them.

Their vices will spoil and ruin, not their own lives merely, not merely the lives of those they marry, but the lives of their children too. The miserable inheritance of their imperfections will be transmitted to coming generations. If it were only possible to keep all these people single, those who will be living thirty years hence would be living in a very different world from this.

Anyhow it is the duty as it is the interest of all young people to take care that their home, if they have one, shall be as nearly like what God meant a human home to be as it can be made. The making of a home is the greatest work that most of them will ever be able to do. In preparing to make it they have the supreme opportunity for showing that they care more for the righteousness and will of God than for all the world besides.

Let us look back again at the home into which Christ was born. Joseph and Mary had charge of the infancy and childhood of Him who was to be the Saviour of the world. The sublimity of the trust fills us with awe. But those of us who have children to care for have also received a trust which should sometimes make us tremble. Their future character, their spirit, their faith, their aims in life, the laws which they will regard as highest and most august, depend largely upon us. With us they begin that history which, if they are true to the Divine idea of life, will be consummated in the power and blessedness of immortality. It depends largely upon us whether they will be true to it or not. The home, for most men, is more than the school and the university. Our vices will poison the air which the young child has to breathe; our virtues will make it wholesome and sweet. It is by what we *are*—not by what we try to appear to be—that the destiny of our children will be determined. Genuine affection, firm trust, mutual respect, honour, and forbearance between the father and the mother; their equity, kindliness, and sympathy in the treatment of their children; their personal virtues and their religious faith—these will create a Christian home. In a Christian home Christ dwells; and those who live with Him in childhood are not likely to revolt against Him when the years of childhood are over. The life which begins with Christ is likely to be spent with Christ and to end in the glory of those unseen mansions, of which every Christian home is a symbol and prophecy.

XII.

POLITICAL AND MUNICIPAL DUTY.

WHEN the Son of God became flesh, He revealed the sacredness of human life; its sacredness, not merely in its direct relations to God, but in its relations to that natural order and social environment by which it is disciplined and developed, and in which it exercises its affections and virtues. In translating us into the kingdom of heaven, He does not separate children from parents, husbands from wives. He takes up the Family into the diviner order, and so consecrates it. He does the same for industry and commerce, for literature, and science, and art. Christ does not pronounce them common and unclean; He makes them His own and transfigures them, by declaring that in all these pursuits men are to do the will of God. Nor does He call us out of that social and political order which is necessary, not only to the prosperity, but to the existence of nations. On the contrary He affirms the sacredness of civil authority, and enforces civil duties with new and Divine sanctions. As there is no conflict between the Divine Kingdom and the Family, neither is there any conflict between the Divine

Kingdom and the State. Christ does not suppress the Family, but purifies and ennobles it. Christ does not suppress the State, but inspires political life with a more generous temper, and directs it to higher ends; He makes loyalty the religious duty of subjects, and under penalty of the Divine displeasure requires rulers to be just.

Unhappily this conception of His work has never yet been firmly grasped by Christendom. In the corrupt ages of the Church, men thought that the Family was not Divine enough for the perfect life; there are many Christian people who are still of the opinion that political activity is inconsistent with saintliness.

There are the clearest indications in the New Testament that the distrust and antagonism which have so long existed between the Church and civil society began early. The apostles had to insist with great energy on the duty of submission to secular governments; and this is an indication that many of the early converts to the Christian faith were disposed to think badly of kings and magistrates, and to dispute their authority. It was not easy, indeed, for Christian men and women in apostolic times to believe that "the powers which be are ordained of God," and to regard civil government as part of the Divine order of the world. Idolatry met the Christian man in all public places. Heathen gods received the homage of the State. The Roman Emperor was the high-priest of Paganism. Why should the sons of

God, the heirs of immortal glory, acknowledge the authority of rulers who were in revolt against the Divine authority; who sometimes persecuted those who were trying to obey the Divine law? And were not all Christians citizens of a Divine Commonwealth? Had they not their own laws? Was not Christ Himself their King? Were they not looking forward to the great day when they would stand at His judgment-seat? Were not earthly kingdoms to be broken up and brought under His authority? Was not this immense revolution the great hope of the Church? Were not the golden days of universal righteousness and peace delayed while the existing order of political and civil society remained unshaken? What claim had secular rulers, secular laws, secular institutions on their allegiance and respect?

The alienation of Christian people from the secular order was increased by their Church organizations. They belonged not only to an invisible kingdom, under the rule of a Prince who reigned at the right hand of God, but to visible societies having regularly appointed rulers, who administered, in concurrence with the commonalty of the faithful, the laws of Christ. It was considered an offence for a Christian man to appeal to heathen judges, for the settlement of any differences between himself and a Christian brother. Jewish communities in heathen cities had acquired the right to appoint magistrates of their own, and within certain limits to govern themselves by their own laws; Christian Churches endeavoured to maintain this tradition of civil autonomy. They tried to have nothing to do with heathen tribunals. What necessity was there for two governments and two systems of law? How could they obey two masters?

The presence of Jews in most Christian Churches during the first century embittered antagonism to the empire. It was the custom of the apostles to begin their evangelistic work in the synagogue; in many Churches converts from Judaism constituted the majority of the membership. The old vision of an earthly Messiah, with armies and fleets to assert His power, had vanished, or was vanishing, but the Jewish hatred and scorn for Gentile rulers, which had been intensified by the glories and disasters of many centuries, by the supreme hope, renewed through age after age, of the future splendour of the Jewish race, and by the consciousness of possessing already a sublimer faith and a nobler morality than any of the heathen nations,—this hatred and this scorn remained. The Churches were infected by the fierce, reckless, revolutionary spirit which was hereditary among the Jewish people.

Peter, therefore, affirms with great strength the duty of obeying the secular authorities, "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,"—*as part of the obedience you owe to Christ*,—"whether it is to the King, as supreme, or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them who do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"—*who in some cases were not silent, and had reasons for saying that Christians were bad citizens*—"as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King."

Paul tells Titus to put Christian people "in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work,"—*to every form of service to the State, which the laws and the magistrates required.*

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul developes more fully the Christian conception of the secular organization of society. The Church is not the only institution that has the Divine sanction: the State is also Divine. Cæsar, the provincial governors, the city magistrates, all "the powers that be," are "ordained of God." Church rulers derive their authority from heaven: so do political rulers. They, too, are "ministers of God's service." Christian men are therefore to submit to them, not only in order to avoid civil penalties, but "for conscience' sake," for "he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God."

Christ had anticipated all these apostolic precepts in His reply to the malignant question of the Pharisees and Herodians,—"Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?" "He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Show me a penny Whose image and superscription hath it? and they said Cæsar's. And He said unto them, Then render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

It is often assumed that the Christian faith is the natural ally and support of oppressive governments, is unfriendly to a generous patriotism, and extinguishes the love of freedom. But it appears that in the earliest times it was associated with a revolutionary spirit, and regarded political authority with resentment. Even in those centuries during which the priesthood and the papacy struggled, and for a time successfully, to appropriate to themselves the powers of civil rulers, the original temper of the Church survived. Ecclesiastical ambition was not without its nobler elements. It attempted, in the name of God, to limit the absolute authority of the State. It asserted that there are regions of human thought and activity over which the State has no sovereignty, and that there are institutions, such as the Family, which are rooted in Divine laws that the State cannot repeal. It was an attempt to resist the encroachments of civil governments on provinces of human life which are beyond its authority. The fault, the crime, lay in the profane attempt to establish the usurpation of the priest in the place of the usurpation of the crown. There was another fault and another crime. The Church, in asserting its own supremacy, impaired the independent authority of the State, and virtually impeached its sacredness as an institution not less truly Divine than itself. The Christian theory, as laid down by Christ Himself, and illustrated by the apostles, is, I think, very clear. There are provinces of human life in which the authority of secular governments is sustained by the will of God. Parliaments, town councils, judges, magistrates, have their place in the Divine order. The Christian man is not released from the obligations of citizenship: to him these obligations are strengthened by new sanctions, and for the manner in which he discharges them he will have to give account at the judgment-seat of God.

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." The precept was suggested by a question about tribute. In its original reference it enforced the duty of paying taxes. Paul describes the levying and collection of taxes as a divinely appointed function of the civil magistrate. This throws quite a new light upon "Committee of Supply," upon the Budget, upon the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, upon Income-tax Commissioners and Custom-house officers, upon the unwelcome documents which we receive from the overseers of the poor and the collectors of rates and taxes. We are to pay "tribute" because civil rulers are "ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing." The tax may be excessive, unfairly levied, unwisely or unjustly spent; if so, the civil rulers are doing their work badly, and will have to account to God for their injustice or their folly. We may try to set them right; in a country with a free constitution, and where private citizens have a large responsibility for the acts of the government, this is a duty. In extreme cases—when, for instance, a tax is levied by an arbitrary exercise of power, and in violation of the recognised rights of the nation, or when a government is so corrupt and tyrannical that the primary objects for which the State exists are not secured—there remains the power, perhaps the duty, of resistance and revolt. But a wise nation will suffer much before it resorts to measures of violence, and good men will be slow to come to the conclusion that the powers which are "ordained of God" have lost the Divine sanction.

There are some people—honest enough in all their private affairs—who seem to think that a tax or a rate is a claim to be evaded. Paul makes tax-paying a religious duty; "the demand note" of the collector is backed by the Divine authority, and countersigned by the Divine hand. What happened when Ananias and Sapphira made a false return to the apostles, who were "ministers of God" representing the Church, we know. It ought to warn us against making false returns to the Income-tax Commissioners, who, according to Paul, and according to the whole Christian conception of secular society, are "ministers of God" representing the State. The tax may be vexatious, it may be unequal, but while it lasts we ought to return every farthing of our income "for conscience' sake."

The same obligation holds in relation to all other public payments. The Custom-house officer is one of the "ministers of God," and to evade lawful "duties" is to evade a Divine claim.

On the other hand, Christian men in Parliament, overseers, members of town councils and of local boards should remember whose servants they are, and should levy taxes and rates justly, and expend them wisely and fairly as the representatives of the authority of God.

But we have not discharged the duty of rendering to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's when we have paid rates and taxes. In many countries the State requires all men of adult age to serve for a definite number of years in the army; in addition to contributing money to pay for the defence of the country they have to defend it themselves. We have no military conscription in England, but our constitution requires that very large numbers of men should give a considerable portion of their time to certain national and municipal duties; if they refuse to do it the whole system of government breaks down. As long as justice is administered by an unpaid magistracy men must consent to spend dismal hours on the bench. As long as our local affairs are under the control of local authorities elected by the ratepayers men must consent to serve on town councils, to be members of watch committees, markets and fairs committees, finance committees, gas committees, water committees, and the rest; and they must consent to accept the mayorality. Other men must be willing to serve on school boards, and others to act as overseers and guardians of the poor. Men who discharge these duties pay a voluntary tax levied on personal service. It is a tax which must be paid by some one, and every man has to determine his own share.

As long as we are governed by two Chambers, a member of the House of Lords has no more right to neglect his legislative duties than a policeman to go off his beat before his time, or a bricklayer who is paid for ten hours' work, to work five hours and sleep or smoke the other five. It is true that most of the men who have to serve in the Upper House inherit their responsibilities by birth, and were never asked whether they would bear the burden of legislation or not. But this does not relieve them from their responsibility. Many of the gravest duties of every man are duties which came to him in the same way; a man's duties to his parents and to his brothers and sisters are just as binding as if he had undertaken them voluntarily. Nor is it enough for an hereditary legislator to discharge his duties as well as he is able; he should try to make himself able to discharge them well.

In the House of Commons a man sits by his own consent, and the obligation to discharge the trust he has received from his constituents is too plain to be ignored. A man who uses his position in that House to promote his private interests instead of the interests of the nation, is guilty of a flagrant moral offence; he is as guilty as a solicitor who uses for his own purposes the money he has received to invest for a client. But men may also be guilty of neglecting duty who refuse to enter the House. It is plain that the State has claims on the services of those who are able to serve it most efficiently. Where there is political knowledge, political sagacity, the power of commanding public confidence, leisure to discharge Parliamentary duties, there is some reason to think that a man is in possession of "the things that are Cæsar's;" it is possible that in refusing to stand for the House of Commons he is defrauding his country, defrauding it as really as if he had returned his income at two thousand a year, when he ought to have returned it at ten. This is a question for a man's judgment and conscience, not for his personal tastes and preferences. It would hardly do for a man to refuse to pay his debts, and to plead in self-defence that paying debts was extremely distasteful to him, and that he found it more agreeable to his personal inclinations to spend his money in other ways.

Civil authority—this is the main point I want to assert—is a Divine institution. The man who holds municipal or political office is a "minister of God." One man may, therefore, have just as real a Divine vocation to become a town councillor or a Member of

Parliament as another to become a missionary to the heathen. In either case it is at a man's peril that he is "disobedient to the heavenly vision." The Divine right of kings was a base corruption of a most noble truth; so was the fanatical dream about "the reign of the saints." We shall never approach the Christian ideal of civil society, until all who hold municipal, judicial, and political offices, recognise the social and political order of the nation as a Divine institution, and discharge their official duties as ministers of God.

But in this country the responsibilities of government are shared by the people. The great outlines of national legislation and policy are laid down, not in Parliament, not in the Cabinet, but at the polling-booths. It is the electors who make war or maintain peace, who repeal old laws and pass new ones, who interfere, justly or unjustly, between landlords and tenants, masters and servants, parents and children. Those who abstain from voting, determine the national policy as truly as those who vote. The responsibility of the Parliamentary franchise cannot be evaded.

I sometimes think that municipalities can do more for the people than Parliament. Their powers will probably be enlarged; but under the powers which they possess already they can greatly diminish the amount of sickness in the community, and can prolong human life. They can prevent—they have prevented—tens of thousands of wives from becoming widows, tens of thousands of children from becoming orphans. They can do very much to improve those miserable homes which are fatal not only to health, but to decency and morality. They can give to the poor the enjoyment of pleasant parks and gardens, and the intellectual cultivation and refinement of public libraries and galleries of art. They can redress in many ways the inequalities of human conditions. The gracious words of Christ, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me," will be addressed not only to those who with their own hands fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and cared for the sick, but to those who supported a municipal policy which lessened the miseries of the wretched, and added brightness to the lives of the desolate. And the terrible rebuke, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto Me," will condemn the selfishness of those who refused to make municipal government the instrument of a policy of justice and humanity.

If, years ago, the Christian people of the metropolis had insisted on having an effective system of municipal government, and had worked its powers vigorously, the "Bitter Cry of Outcast London" need never have been heard. Now that the cry has come to them the churches will never be able to remedy the evil apart from the action of municipal authorities. Medicine, and not the gospel only, is necessary to cure the sick. Municipal action, and not the gospel only, is necessary to improve the homes of the poor.

In some countries the local authorities corresponding to our mayor and town council, are appointed by the Crown. The duty of appointment is a difficult one; the central government can never have all the knowledge necessary to appoint wisely. With us the duty of appointment is thrown upon the ratepayers, and the duty carries with it grave responsibilities.

The municipal as well as the political franchise is a trust; both are to be used, not for private but for public purposes. If in appointing an ambassador to Paris, St. Petersburg, or Berlin, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were influenced by improper motives; if they appointed a man, not because they thought that on the whole he was the best man available for the post, but because he was an old friend; or if they recalled one ambassador and sent out another on the ground of personal pique, and to gratify personal resentment; or if a man obtained the appointment by giving splendid entertainments to his political patrons or friends; it would be a public scandal. If he obtained it by a bribe—by a bribe given in any form—by a heavy subscription, for instance, to the election fund of the Carlton or the Reform Club—it would be a public crime.

But the same moral laws that govern the exercise of political patronage, govern the exercise of the franchise. If in a municipal or a political contest, you vote for a man for no other reason than that he is a friend or a neighbour, and it would not be pleasant to disoblige him; or because the rival candidate passed you in the street without speaking to you, or omitted to invite you to a dinner-party, or forgot to tell his wife that your daughters were to be asked to a dance—this is a clear violation of public duty. If you vote for a man for no other reason than that he has subscribed to a hospital, or a school, or a church, in which you happen to be interested, or because he sustained your application for some public office; if you refuse to vote for him because he told the manager of the bank of which he happens to be a director, to decline to increase your "over-draw," or because he gives you no orders for coals or meat—this is positive corruption.

According to the Divine order civil authority is necessary to the existence of civil society. Civil rulers are "ministers of God." But they are not designated to their office by a voice from heaven. In this country the sovereign and the peers inherit their position by birth; the rest have to be selected, directly or indirectly, by those who possess the franchise. It is surely a part of God's service to determine who shall be God's "ministers," and for the manner in which we discharge this service we are responsible to God. Not to vote is to act the part of the unfaithful servant who hid his talent in the earth and made no use of it. To vote corruptly is felony; it is to appropriate to our own purposes what we have received as trustees for the town or the nation.

Those who are in the habit of speaking of political life as though it were unfriendly to all the pursuits and interests of the kingdom of Christ, and who therefore decline to discharge their political duties, are strangely inconsistent. If a municipality proposes to open libraries or museums on a Sunday, many excellent Christian people become greatly excited and strain all their influence to prevent what they regard as a desecration of the weekly day of rest; but they do not seem to believe that members of a town council have to get the will of God done on Monday and Tuesday as well as on Sunday, and that Christian ratepayers ought to elect the men who will do it. If a parliamentary oath is to be abolished, these devout persons sign petitions and make speeches against the abolition: for a professed atheist to get into Parliament seems to them a terrible scandal in a Christian country; but many of these same persons regard the actual business of Parliament as so remote from the province of religious duty as to make it a very "worldly" thing for a Christian man to interest himself in politics; if this is a true account of political life, then all the members of the House of Commons ought to be atheists. I pronounce no judgment in this place on either of these measures. It may be the duty of Christian men to insist that municipalities shall refuse to open libraries, museums, art galleries, on Sunday; it may be their duty to insist that Parliament shall refuse to permit a man known to be an atheist to take the oath. But it is rather odd and not quite intelligible that those who regard politics as the special province of the prince of this world, and who ordinarily shun all contact with political life for fear of losing their spirituality of mind, should now and then become zealous politicians in order to protect the interests of the Christian faith, and to maintain the honour of God. If political forces are so incurably evil, one would suppose that the defence of the kingdom of heaven would be the last purpose for which Christian men would be willing to use them. They pray for kings and magistrates; but if politics are so fatal to Christian fidelity, kings and magistrates are past praying for. They enjoy—apparently without any qualms of conscience—all the advantages of municipal and national institutions; but if municipal and political activity is ruinous to the souls of all who engage in it, Christian men ought to decline the personal advantages which are bought at so fearful a price.

Paul has taught us a nobler and profounder theory of politics. "The powers that be are ordained of God," for the maintenance of public order, for the protection of life, of property, and of personal freedom. Civil rulers are "ministers of God," and their service is necessary to secure the great ends of civil society, the diffusion of material comfort, the accumulation of material wealth, the cultivation of the intellectual life of the race, the transmission from generation to generation of the discoveries of science and the triumphs of art. Apart from civil society some of the noblest and most generous virtues could never be developed. Through the Municipality and the State, as well as through the Family and the Church, the infinite righteousness and goodness and mercy of God have provided for the discipline of human perfection. The true duty of the Christian man is, not to forsake municipal and political life because it is corrupt, but to carry into municipal and political activity the law and the spirit of Christ ; to resolve to do his part to secure for his fellow-townsmen and his fellow-countrymen all those blessings which a municipality and a nation, justly, wisely, and efficiently governed, can secure for them ; that so "the powers" which are "ordained of God" may fulfil the purpose for which He ordained them, and the Divine will be done by civil rulers on earth as it is done by angels and the spirits of the just in heaven.

XIII.

THE MORAL PRECEPTS OF CHRIST GENERALLY.

IN our Lord's ethical teaching, He recognised the worth and the authority of the ethical knowledge which men already possessed. It was not necessary that He should speak to Jews as though they did not regard the Ten Commandments as Divine laws for the regulation of human life. He assumed that their conscience had been developed and instructed by a long succession of great religious and moral teachers. He built on the foundations of Moses and the prophets.

About some moral virtues He said little or nothing. His objects were practical—not speculative. He did not care, merely for the sake of giving theoretical completeness to His ethical system, to re-assert obligations which were universally acknowledged. He did not begin at the beginning. He began with men where He found them; and led them on to diviner ideals of righteousness. The Jews knew already that murder was a crime, and that whoever killed a man had to submit to trial, and either justify the act or suffer for it. But Christ taught that there is a tribunal at which men must give account of their words as well as their actions; that words of severe moral condemnation and words of scorn may have the same moral quality as deeds of violence; and that even anger may be criminal, though it may find expression neither in act nor speech. They knew that gross acts of sensuality were immoral: but Christ taught them that sensual thoughts and sensual impulses, voluntarily indulged, are, in the Divine judgment, akin to sensual acts, and that God condemns those who commit adultery in their heart. They knew that it was a grave moral offence to swear a false oath: but Christ taught them that they ought to be so truthful in their common speech as to render oaths unnecessary. They knew that they were under obligations to be just: Christ transfigured the law of justice, and said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them."

The ethical method of Christ was the ethical method of the apostles. It was not necessary that they should speak to heathen men as if they knew nothing of the principles of morality. Among the Greeks and the Romans, justice, temperance, fortitude, and prudence were honoured as the elements of a noble life, and the virtues of private citizens were regarded as necessary to the strength and safety of the community. Their moral life had been developed by the family and the state, by common sorrows and common joys, by industry, by commerce, by war, by the conflicts of political parties, by civil and criminal legislation. Even the most barbarous races had some knowledge of moral duty. Paul made his appeal to the conscience of heathen men, and speaks of "the law written in their hearts." John, after being surrounded for many years by the licentious immorality of Asia Minor, believed in "the light which lighteth every man."

We are not, therefore, to be surprised if there are some considerable virtues which are not inculcated in the New Testament by any explicit precepts. The Christian revelation takes its place in the great historic development of the religious and moral life of man. The Eternal Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us had not been silent during the ages which preceded the Incarnation; nor had the Divine voice been heard only among the Jewish people. The natural conscience of man had received illumination from Christ, and, among the nobler races, had discovered the great outlines of human duty. As Christ built upon the foundations of Moses and the prophets, He also built upon whatever was true and just in the common morality of mankind. He did not disparage the illumination which the natural conscience had received from Himself. What He had taught men with sufficient clearness before He became man, it was unnecessary that He should teach them again.

And in the permanent appeal of Christ to the human race—in His appeal to ourselves—He does not speak to us as if He were a stranger, needing credentials to command our confidence. He takes it for granted that we shall know His voice. He assumes that we are already His disciples, and that whatever light we have has come from Him, "the light of the world." What we have already learnt from Him should prepare us for His further teaching. He relies on the conscience of man to recognise His authority.

And yet there are many of His precepts which are very remote from the moral principles by which most men suppose that human life ought to be governed. There are passages in the Sermon on the Mount which naturally suggest the objection that, as a moral teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ is too unpractical to be trusted; and I confess that I am astonished by the unmeasured admiration which is often expressed for our Lord's ethical teaching by persons who reject the supernatural contents of the Christian revelation in which that teaching is rooted. For Christ demands an impossible perfection.

No doubt many of His precepts were intentionally expressed in a startling form—a form intended to make it quite clear that they were not meant to be mere rules of conduct. For the most part they are directly addressed to the conscience and the heart rather than to the will. Christ claims authority over us, and apart from unreserved obedience to Him there can be no true Christian morality; but His specific commandments are meant to quicken and to enlighten the moral sense, and to ennoble our conceptions of moral duty, rather than to give us definite directions to guide our actions. He has made it impossible for us to treat them as the Jewish rabbis treated the commandments of the Old Testament.

Take a few illustrations. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away;" the command to love our neighbours as ourselves quite prevents us from regarding this precept as a definite rule of action, for we could not do some men greater harm than by giving them what they asked for and lending them what they wanted to borrow. "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;" to do this literally would be to irritate an angry man to fury, and we are sure that Christ did not mean us to offer provocation to fresh violence. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth;" if this were meant to be literally obeyed it would forbid the farmer to store his harvest in the autumn for the coming winter, and would require him to give his wheat to the cattle or leave it on the ground instead of carrying it to his barns.

But even when we have distinguished between the picturesque forms of our Lord's precepts and their inner reality and meaning, we have not escaped from the difficulty. Men do not speak their real thoughts; if they did, they would say that many of Christ's commandments are, in their spirit and substance, fantastic and impossible. They do not become easier to obey, but very much harder, when, instead of taking them as they stand and treating them as rules of conduct, we treat them as the expression of principles which are to be a law to the inward life.

"Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." If this were meant to be taken literally it would impose an extremely light duty. For in decent civilized society men very seldom smite us either on the right cheek or the left, so that the duty of turning the other would not come often; and if any one happened to smite us on one cheek, to turn the other as an act of obedience to Christ would require very little effort. But never to feel personal resentment against those who recklessly misrepresent us, who slander us, who insult us; and even when duty requires us to take measures to resist or to redress an injury, to be as free from the spirit of revenge as a judge on the bench when he sentences a thief to be imprisoned or a murderer to be hung; to be righteously indignant at wrong-doing, but not to suffer the sense of the wrong done to ourselves to exaggerate the guilt of the wrong-doer, or to make us desire for our personal satisfaction that he should suffer for his offence—this is a much more difficult matter, and this is what Christ requires.

Or, if we supposed that when Christ said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," He meant that we are not to be thrifty and save money, nine men out of ten would find it delightfully simple to reach the height of perfection. Not to save money! nothing can be easier; with most of us the difficulty lies all the other way. Christ's precept is harder than it looks. It requires an emancipation of the heart from the love of wealth; a perfect trust in the Divine care. It requires us to have thoughts about what constitutes wealth quite different from the thoughts of those who have not passed into the Kingdom of Heaven. This is a duty which is quite beyond our strength; and very many reasons may be alleged to prove that it is not a duty at all.

When we begin to take Christ's moral teaching seriously, we shall sometimes find ourselves on the point of saying that it is "in the air;" that it has no solid foundations, and is out of all real relations to human life. Men have actually said this. They have contended that to take the precepts of Christ literally and as they stand would break up the order of human society, would destroy some of the common virtues which are the security of human institutions, would make property worthless, would render the progress of civilization impossible. If, on the other hand, these precepts are taken in their real sense, they imply the necessity of a still greater change in the whole moral life of mankind. The substance of our Lord's moral teaching is so startling that men regard it not unnaturally as too highly strained; very beautiful as an ideal, but not the kind of teaching which can be accepted as a real law of life; it is too romantic; it is not sufficiently homely; it asks for too much.

We may not put thoughts like these into words, but I am greatly mistaken if such thoughts are not actually present in many minds. We may be afraid to *think* them, and yet they influence us. And so instead of giving the laws of Christ any real authority we silently put them aside, and accept in their place the current moral maxims of our country and our age. Instead, for instance, of forgiving our brother though he sin against us seven times a day, instead of trying to do this in any sense that can be put upon the precept which requires it, we stand upon what we call our personal dignity, which the common opinion of society permits and even requires us to maintain. Instead of forgiving the man who has offended us, we think it enough if we keep out of his way and say nothing against him; we suppose that we have been very magnanimous if we have "looked over" an offence two or three times—though "looking over" an offence is not quite the same as forgiving it; and we think that we are quite at liberty to have nothing to do with the offender if he offends again.

We think it impossible that our Lord could have really meant what He said; or if He meant it, we say vaguely that precepts of this kind about forgiving a man seven times a day, turning the left cheek to be smitten when we have been smitten on the right, and loving our enemies, are precepts which it will be impossible to obey till the golden days of the millennium have begun. But this is an irrational evasion. If the Christian Church ever reaches ideal perfection, all these precepts will become obsolete. The millennium, if it is ever to come to the Church on earth, will be precisely the age in which it will be impossible to obey them. When the whole earth is filled with the glory of God, and the whole race penetrated by the spirit of Christ, there will be none to smite us on the right cheek, and Christian meekness will have no occasion to turn the left cheek to the smiter; all offences will cease, and for Christian charity to forgive an offender seven times will therefore be impossible; we shall be unable to love our enemies, for there will be no enemies left in the world to love.

In our better moments we are able to see that Christ has, after all, revealed the perfect life. If we could only obey His laws it would be well with us. His commandments transcend the common maxims of morality, but in transcending fulfil them. It may, perhaps, be necessary to impose oaths on men to make their testimony in courts of justice truthful; but the ideal law requires an habitual truthfulness which would render oaths unnecessary. The time may not have come for breaking up our war ships, closing our arsenals, disbanding our armies, but the temper which Christ inculcates when He says "Resist not evil" would lessen the occasions of national quarrels, and when difficulties arise would make a peaceful solution easy. If we kept a check on our anger we should never be guilty of acts of violence. If we felt the stain of sensual thoughts like a wound, we should never be guilty of acts of sensuality. It may be true that an eager passion for wealth has been one of the chief springs of industry, and has contributed to the development of the material prosperity of the race. But it is also true that the race has become rich as the result of scientific discoveries which were made by men who cared nothing for riches; and that it was only because these men did not lay up treasures on earth for themselves that they were able to increase the wealth of others. Nor would the world become poorer if manufacturers, merchants, tradesmen, and working people regarded their secular occupations not simply as a means for earning bread and making money for themselves, but as the service which they are appointed by God to render to mankind. Under the new motive, if they had the spirit of Christ, they would work as hard as under the old; and the new motive would save them from many practical mistakes, and from many immoralities which at present lessen the efficiency of their industry.

But the question returns, Is Christian morality possible? In the Gospel of Luke, the precept requiring us to forgive our penitent brother, no matter how often he offends us, is followed immediately by the words, "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." It is not certain that the prayer was the answer which the apostles gave to the precept; but there are many of the precepts of Christ which naturally suggest the prayer. For if we think that the laws of Christ require a perfection which it is useless to attempt to reach, our faith in Christ is defective: we reject Him as the Lord of life and conduct, though we may think that we receive Him as the sacrifice for our sin, and our Saviour from eternal destruction. But where there is a real faith in Christ, there will be faith in His commandments as well as in His promises; in what He has said about human morality, as well as in what He has said about Divine grace. A man may believe in the Nicene Creed and in the creed attributed to Athanasius, or in the Confession of Augsburg, or the Confession of the Westminster divines; but if he does not believe in the Sermon on the Mount—believe in it seriously as containing the laws which must govern his own life—he has denied the faith, and is in revolt against Christ.

The doctrines and the ethics of the Christian revelation are really inseparable. Christian morals are rooted in the central mystery of our relation to God in Christ, and God's relation to us in Him; and we must believe in some of the characteristic doctrines of Christ before we can discover the possibility of obeying His commandments. The immense demands of the Sermon on the Mount are explained by what our Lord said to Nicodemus about the new birth, by what He said to the woman of Samaria about the living water, by what He said in the synagogue at Capernaum about the Bread of

Life, by what He said to the elect disciples about the Vine and the branches. The diviner life which Christ gives must find its expression in a diviner morality than is possible to man before that life comes to him. While we are "apart" from Christ, His commandments require a perfection beyond our strength; but when He abides in us and we abide in Him we can keep the laws of Christ, because the life of Christ has become ours. His laws are promises; His ethics are doctrines. If He calls us to a righteousness which we cannot achieve unless we receive the life of God, He means us to ask Him for that life with a sure confidence that the prayer will be answered. If He has given us an ideal of perfection which seems to belong to a nobler world than this, He means us to believe that He has founded the Kingdom of Heaven among men; and that even while we are still environed by "things seen and temporal," we may live in God and God in us.

XIV.

CHRISTIAN WORLDLINESS.

THE title of this paper is a paradox. Between Christianity and "Worldliness" there is perpetual conflict; they can make no terms; even a temporary truce is impossible. The ideal Christian life is a life in God—a life under the absolute control of the laws of an invisible, eternal, and Divine kingdom.

But there are two wholly different conceptions of the relations between the kingdom of God into which, if we are in Christ, we have already passed, and the interests, pleasures, and pursuits of the earthly life. According to one conception, our environment in this present world ought to have no attraction or charm when once we have seen the face of God and have learnt that we are to inherit immortal righteousness, wisdom, and glory. The light should fade which once shone on the mountains and the sea. Flowers should lose their grace; winds and running streams and the rustling leaves their music; stars their lustre. Delight in literature and in art should become languid. The passion for scientific discovery should be quenched. Interest in the political affairs of nations should be suppressed. All pleasures except those which flow direct from the springs of eternal joy should cease to afford even transient satisfaction. The right temper to cultivate in relation to all that once seemed fairest, purest, noblest in this present life, is a temper of indifference or even of discontent. This conception of the true place of the world in Christian thought is sanctioned by great traditions, by many manuals for the conduct of the Christian life; and there are certain morbid moods of religious feeling in which it appears to be the necessary result of a real and habitual faith in God and in Immortality.

But "for everything there is a season." At present, and until our mortal years are spent, our place is among these visible and transitory things. We are here "by the will of God." Our feet are in the dust, though our eyes may be made glad by the shining heavens. We are surrounded by an infinite and eternal universe; our relations to it are real, intimate, and enduring; the springs of our life and strength are there; and yet we cannot dissolve our relations to another and inferior order. And according to the Christian faith this inferior order is also Divine. The fires of the sun are to burn themselves out and we shall see them sink and disappear, but God kindled them. This wonderful world—with its beauty and its terror—its green pastures and still waters—its deserts and its stormy seas, its luxuriant and fertile plains, its wide wastes of snow and ice—is to pass away; but God made it. It was He who created what Paul describes as "our outward man," which is "decaying," as well as "our inward man," which is "renewed day by day;" and all our physical necessities, instincts, and sensibilities on the one hand, with the boundless provision for their gratification on the other, are the expressions of the Divine thought, and the effect of Divine volitions. The loftier powers and finer capacities which find their exercise and their satisfaction in the discovery of truth, and in the vision or creation of all forms of beauty, also came from Him. "Discontent" with conditions of life which God has appointed can hardly be the legitimate and necessary result of the supreme revelation of God's righteousness and love. "Indifference" to the pleasant things which are the gifts of the Divine goodness can hardly be the right temper for those to cherish who have been "made partakers of the Divine nature." What God thought worth giving should be received gratefully and heartily enjoyed.

The revolution of thought concerning this present life produced by an intelligent and devout acceptance of the Christian revelation corresponds to that which was produced by the discovery of the true theory of the physical universe. The earth has ceased to be the centre round which suns and stars revolve, but it retains its place among the hosts of God. Its relative magnitude has been reduced, but the actual height of its mountains, and the actual breadth of its continents and oceans have not been diminished. And although we are environed by immensity, and know that many of the stars which shine in its awful depths are burning suns,—each one of them, perhaps the centre of vast and undiscovered worlds,—the earth is still our home, and the laws which govern the most august of the principalities and powers among the luminaries of heaven are the laws which govern the motions of this inferior orb. To the Christian man this life is not an outlying waste, forsaken of God and unblessed; it is one of the provinces of the Divine kingdom; the most trivial of our occupations, the most transient of our joys and sorrows ought to find their place in the Divine order. It must be possible for us, with a clear vision of eternity and of the great glory of God, to stand in friendly and kindly relations to this present world. This is what I mean by "Christian Worldliness."

M. Renan's account of the Galilean ministry of our Lord is an idyl, a romance; but there are elements of truth in it which had disappeared from the traditional conception of our Lord's earthly life. The four Gospels give us the impression that Jesus of Nazareth had a great personal charm which was felt by all sorts of people. I think that they also give us the impression that, at least in the earlier years of His ministry, this charm was partly derived from His buoyancy of spirit, His animation, His innocent delight in pleasant things, in trees and flowers and birds, in the ripening corn, in the fresh air of the hills, and in the shining waters of the lake. The charm was increased by His frank and alert interest in the common affairs of common people, in their sowing and reaping, in their building and fishing, as well as in what we should call their "religious life." No one that wanted a wedding to pass off cheerfully would have invited John the Baptist; our Lord was a welcome guest. Sometimes He went into mountain solitudes to pray, and His home was always with God; even in the early months of His ministry the shadow of His final sorrows seems to have fallen on Him; but He did not remain on remote heights, apart from the ordinary interests of men; nor did the premonitions which came to Him of His supreme agony prevent Him from sympathising deeply with the common troubles of mankind or from rejoicing in their gladness. There is a kind of spiritual detachment which, even when a man is surrounded by crowds, separates him as completely from the interests of the rest of the race as though he were surrounded by thick monastic walls through which no sound of the stormy winds and restless waves of the outside world could penetrate; but this seclusion is not illustrated and enforced by the example of Christ, and it is plainly condemned by the genial, generous, cordial spirit of His teaching.

It may be alleged that in all ages noble and devout men have come to regard the world with dissatisfaction and discontent, and that this temper is formally sanctioned, not by a few scattered texts in Holy Scripture, but by a whole Book; the twelve chapters of the Book of Ecclesiastes being successive variations on one theme—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But is it quite clear that the Book of Ecclesiastes contains the Christian theory of human life? Does it illustrate the spirit with which a Christian man should regard the pleasant things of this world? Whoever the writer may have been, and whether or not he has given us the record of his own experience, the Book is to be read as containing the confessions of a man whose life had been a mournful failure and disappointment. He had become weary of everything—weary of knowledge, weary of greatness, weary of wealth; weary of his palaces, his parks, his gardens, and his vineyards; weary of his men-singers and his women-singers; weary of observing the sorrows of men; weary of observing their joys. He was weary of the moral order of the world, for he had seen folly set in great dignity and the poor man's wisdom despised; all things came alike to all; there was one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the religious man that offered sacrifice and to the irreligious man that offered none; "as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath;" the just man perished in his righteousness and the life of the wicked man was prolonged. He was weary of the earth itself, which lasted on while one generation came and another passed away; he was weary of the regularity of the rising and the setting of the sun, weary of the waywardness of the changing winds, weary of the monotony of the rivers which were always running into the sea. The dead, so he thought, were better off than the living, for they had done with life; it would have been better still if they had never lived at all. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

This was how the world looked to the writer of this Book; whether this was how God meant it to look to him is another question. This is how the world looks to many of us in some moods. And if we are to believe very much that appears in our current literature, this bitter melancholy, this profound discontent with all things in heaven above and on the earth beneath, is becoming more common than it used to be. This brilliant age of ours, like the real or imaginary subject of the Book of Ecclesiastes, has made great works, has built houses, has gathered silver and gold, even the property of princes; it has also given its heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; it has come to great estate, and it has gotten wisdom above all the ages that have been before it; yea, has seen much of wisdom and knowledge. And the end of it all seems to be this—the question is asked, whether life is worth living. The confessions of the ancient Jew are being translated into our modern English speech. There is less of poetic grace, of pathos, and of sadness in the English translation than in the Jewish original, but the substance is the same.

Now, I do not wonder that men who have given up the four Gospels come to believe in the Book of Ecclesiastes. That is a just Nemesis. A man may be sure that sooner or later the Bible will find him *somewhere.* Let him refuse to believe what it tells him about God, and he will be startled at discovering how much truth it will tell him about himself. But that this bitter and humiliating theory of human life should have found its way into the Christian Church, that this restless dissatisfaction with the world and all that is in it—a dissatisfaction which was plainly the penalty of self-indulgence and irreligion—should be sought and cherished as though it were one of the elements of Christian perfection, is almost unintelligible. Some Christian people have made the astonishing mistake of binding up the Book of Ecclesiastes with the New Testament: they have put it somewhere between the four Gospels and the Revelation of John—an impossible place. They treat it as though it had been written by Paul in his last days instead of by Solomon, or by some unknown writer who wanted to represent the weariness and despondency of a wasted life. We, too, are required to write this melancholy epitaph over all our wisdom strength, honour, and joy, over our libraries, over our galleries of art, over the laboratories of science—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit; vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And if we are not in the mood to write it, it is half suspected that we are not as devout as we should be. I deny altogether the legitimacy of this appeal to the Book of Ecclesiastes, as though it contained the Christian theory of human life: the book was not written by a great saint, but by a great sinner.

But our false conception of the relations of the Christian man to the world is not really derived from this ancient Jewish book; it is part of that miserable inheritance which has descended to us from the worst days of Christendom. It is quite time that we Protestants got rid of the traditional Romish saint—the saint that we see on the walls of every picture-gallery in Europe, the saint that still haunts the imagination of hundreds of thousands of devout men who regard the Romish apostasy with horror. Every one knows the kind of figure I mean—the thin, pale face, the eyes red with tears or weary with watching, the transparent hands, the wasted form. That was the Roman Catholic saint, the saint of the Middle Ages, the saint, too, of those early Christian centuries, when the Christian faith was coloured by the dark superstitions and philosophical speculations of races that were just emerging from heathenism. We have given up the theology of Rome; we have forgotten to revise the Romish conception of the religious life. The Romish ideal of saintliness was the creation of Romish theology; all that was true and noble in it—and there was much that was true and noble in it—came from those eternal principles of the Christian faith which were not altogether suppressed or forgotten even in the darkest and most evil times; all that was artificial, ignoble, and unlovely came from those Romish errors which we renounced at the Reformation. Between belief and character, theory and conduct, theology and the ideal of spiritual perfection, there is a vital connection. It was the theology of Rome that developed the characteristic type of holiness in the Roman Church, and now that we have parted with the theology, we ought to have a different type of sanctity.

But we are still mastered by the spell of the ancient tradition. We can hardly think of a man as a saint unless he is very quiet, placid, and subdued; if there is a touch of melancholy in him we are better pleased. He must not be too strong; he must be a little pale; and must not have too much flesh on him. A man of another sort, with plenty of muscle in his arms and plenty of colour in his face; with a ringing voice, a broad chest, sound lungs, a vigorous pulse, and a firm step; with a healthy appetite and a good digestion; with a cheerful satisfaction in the pleasures of life, and a buoyancy of spirit that rises above most of its troubles; with an elasticity of temper that refuses to be chained to gloomy memories and to be vexed by common cares, that prefers the glad open sunshine to the shadows of solemn cloisters—such a man hardly satisfies us. Without knowing exactly why, we find it hard to think of a man like this as a saint. A keen delight in common work and common pleasures seems to most of us inconsistent with the great life of Faith and with unbroken communion with God.

The late Canon Mozley, who is better worth reading when he is wrong than most other men are when they are right, has said some very suggestive things on this subject in his essay on the late Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, and they illustrate rather strikingly the point on which I am insisting. He thinks that in what he describes as Arnold's "vigorous, youthful, eager, intense, lively, affectionate, hearty and powerful character," there was a certain deficiency; that there was not enough of sadness in it to touch our deeper sympathies. He says that we are sorry when our friends are unhappy, but that "we do not like them less, but more—yes, more, for being so"—a sentence which, I think, is not true without considerable qualifications. For everything depends on the cause and the quality of their unhappiness; there is a kind of discontent and fretfulness which repels and is likely to quench affection. A wilful absorption in sad memories, an excessive anxiety about personal interests, a refusal to be happy, make cordiality of love and friendship almost impossible.

Canon Mozley goes on to say, "Arnold's character is too luscious, too joyous, too luxuriant, too brimful. . . . The colour is good, but the composition is too rich. Head full, heart full, eyes beaming, affections met, sunshine in the breast, all nature embracing him—here is too much glow of earthly mellowness, too much actual liquid in the light. The happy instinct is despotic in him; he cannot help it, but he is always happy, likes everything that he is doing so prodigiously—the tail is wagging, the bird whistles, the cricket chirps." This is a caricature, and there are lines in it which are not to be found in the original. Arnold's strenuous energy, both in work and play, was, perhaps, his most remarkable quality, and the idea of energy is hardly suggested by describing his character as "luscious" and "luxuriant." But though a caricature, the sketch is sufficiently accurate to be recognised. I remember reading Arnold's Life thirty years ago, and I happened to be reading at the same time the Life of John Foster, which, in its way, was an equally interesting and remarkable biography. I turned from one book to the other, and the contrast between them heightened the effect of each. To pass from the secluded, cheerless, meditative life of Foster to the life of Arnold was like passing from a close, ill-ventilated, neglected room into which the sun never shines, and where the song of a bird is never heard, and the grace of a flower never seen, on to the hill-side, with a fresh wind blowing, the sky full of sunlight, and a view stretching over miles of glorious country to the open sea.

Mozley thinks justly that Arnold was a representative of high joyous Lutheranism rather than of Catholicism. Not that Arnold was altogether a Lutheran in theology, but he was a Lutheran in temper and character; and therefore he was not a saint of the true Catholic type. Mozley would not admit that such a man, however good and excellent, can be a saint at all. The saint must be less brilliant in colour; sad, neutral tints must predominate; there must be a great depth of shadow. Mozley hit the mark exactly in this contrast between the ideal of Catholicism and the genuine growth of Lutheranism. He preferred the Catholic. Heart and soul, with the full concurrence of all that I have learned from the New Testament about the will of God, I prefer the Protestant.

The principal cause of the difference between the Lutheran or Protestant type of the religious life and the Catholic, is to be found in that central truth concerning the infinite love of God and the freedom of God's salvation, which Luther preached under the name of Justification by Faith. It has been said that Luther rediscovered God; with God he rediscovered the gospel. He came to men fresh from the presence of Christ, whose mission it was, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and who is the propitiation for the sin of the world. He declared that neither by fasting, nor by painful self-discipline, nor by protracted and successful struggle with temptation, are men to obtain God's forgiveness and to pass out of darkness into the clear light of the Divine presence, but by Faith. Redemption is God's free gift conferred on every man that consents to receive it.

It was a wonderful gospel. Men listened to it with the agitation of a great joy and with immeasurable hope. Luther said to them :—You are troubled by the consciousness of guilt ; you look back upon years stained with sin ; you are sinful still ; your conscience tortures you and refuses to give you peace ; you are sure that God must regard your sin with a deeper abhorrence than that with which you regard it yourself, and you are right ; you look forward with terror to the hour when you will appear before His judgment seat. How are you to obtain forgiveness, and with forgiveness deliverance from the pains of eternal death ? The Church tells you to confess to a priest, to do penance, to fast, to pray, to mortify the flesh. To make your salvation the surer, it encourages you to shut yourself up in a cell, that through years of unbroken solitude you may meditate on your crimes, and with tears and groans implore the Divine pardon ; it puts a scourge into your hands to chastise your sinful body. You will be still safer if you wear a hair shirt and a belt with iron points in it next your skin. By physical discipline, by mental torture, and by the devout use of the sacraments you may hope to escape the eternal fires. This is the gospel of the Church. But I, exclaimed Luther, have a nobler gospel. Christ suffered for your sins ; God is ready to forgive them. Away with all these miserable inventions of superstition and slavish unbelief! Listen to the parable of the Prodigal Son. His father saw him "while he was yet afar off," and "was moved with compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him"; forgave him at once and brought him home. Was there a hair shirt for him, an iron girdle, a cruel scourge, long fasting? That is not God's way of receiving a penitent child. "Bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;" kill the fatted calf; and fill the house with music and dancing.

That is the Lutheran gospel, and you see the joyousness of it. Catholicism keeps the penitent in painful suspense. Having forfeited the complete remission of sins granted him in baptism, he can never be certain that he has recovered it. As long as life lasts he is in trouble; he must still be clearing off old scores; when this life is over he may have to pass through fierce purgatorial fires.

But for the Lutheran, as soon as he saw the righteousness and power and infinite love of God which were revealed in Christ, the guilt of past years vanished and left the blue heaven without a cloud.

Nor was this all. Lutheranism was happy in the present and confident about the future, as well as at rest about the past. Its temper was a temper of unmeasured faith in God. It caught the triumphant spirit of its favourite apostle, and said with him, "Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand"—*have had it* already; and "let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but let us also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation; and probation, hope; and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us," and we are filled with the light of God's love for us as the heavens on a summer morning are filled with the glowing light of a cloudless sun. "If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" This was the Protestant spirit, a spirit of exulting thanksgiving and of exulting hope. It was the antithesis of the despondency which had prevailed in Christendom for many centuries. It taught every man to have unmeasured confidence in the Divine mercy for the forgiveness of his past sins, and unmeasured confidence in the Divine inspiration for the strength he needed in the future to live devoutly and righteously.

The second element of confidence had as great a place as the first in the creation of a new type of the religious life. For the ideal Catholic saint is the monk, and monasticism in its best times and its highest moods sprang from a noble despair. The world was so full of evil, that for a man who wanted to live in God the only safety seemed to be in flight; to master it completely seemed impossible. Its pleasures were very pleasant—so pleasant that the monk was afraid that while he was within their reach he would be unable to resist their charm, and therefore he fled from them. It is always hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven ; and the monk thought it so hard that he stripped himself of everything and accepted a voluntary poverty. Wife and children—they may become our chief care and our chief delight, and the monk, being afraid that if he had wife and children to love, they might lessen the passion of his love for God, took vows of perpetual celibacy. Robust physical vigour and the physical enjoyments of life sometimes refuse the control of the Divine will, and therefore the monk wasted his strength by fasting, watching, and prayer. It all came from a vehement desire to please God perfectly, but the desire was not associated with a confident faith in the power of God to enable us to please Him perfectly in the common paths of men.

Protestantism, with its clear, strong, happy consciousness of alliance with God, gave men courage to face the world—to fight its evils instead of flying from them. It believed in the great idea of the noble prayer—" Thy will be done "—not in the Church merely, not in the monastery merely—but "Thy will be done on earth "—in the family, on the farm, in the workshop, in the counting-house, in the courts of kings, in parliaments, in the army, in the painting-room, in the college, in the school—"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The world, with its complex social order, its intellectual activities, its material wealth, is not to be given over to the devil: God made it, and Christian men have to win it back to God again.

This element of Protestantism was, no doubt, greatly invigorated by the influence of the Renaissance. Something of the old pagan delight in physical strength and beauty was associated with the fresh enthusiasm with which the intellect of Europe recovered the immortal monuments of the genius of Greece; and to the Catholic conception of human life the movement was fatal. Reconciliation was impossible. But the healthier and nobler forces of the Renaissance found their natural home and received religious sanction in Protestantism; and in its turn the new learning contributed to the triumph of the new faith.

Luther himself was a fine example of the spirit of Lutheranism. He had a fiery and passionate hatred of falsehood and of sin; a dauntless courage in the assertion of the claims of truth and righteousness. He had a boundless faith and a boundless joy in God. His joy was of a masculine kind, and made him stronger for his work. His faith was of a masculine kind, and relieved him from worrying doubts and fears about his soul's affairs. He had his gloomy times, his conflicts with principalities and powers in dismal and solitary places; but he had no morbid dreams about the sanctity of misery, nor did he suppose that the ever-blessed God finds any satisfaction in the self-inflicted sufferings of His children.

His massive face and robust form were the outward and visible signs of the vigour and massiveness of his moral and religious character. He was a man, and did not try to be anything else: God made him a man, what was he that he should quarrel with God's work? He had flesh and blood; he could not help it. He did not desire to help it. He ate heartily and enjoyed seeing his friends at dinner. He married a wife and loved her; and he loved God none the less. He liked music and songs as well as psalms and sermons. He could laugh as well as preach. He had a genial humour as well as deep devoutness. He was a brave man, strong and resolute, with abounding life of all kinds; a saint of a type with which, for many evil centuries, Christendom had been unfamiliar.

Not yet do Protestants thoroughly understand the immense revolution which Protestantism must ultimately bring about in the whole sphere of the moral and religious life of man. What is there, some good men persist in asking—what is there to satisfy the immortal soul, in music, in painting, in literature, in travel, in the mystery and peace of lonely glens, in the majesty of mountains, in the shining sea? That is all very true, but nothing to the purpose. I might as well ask a poor ill-clothed wretch, shivering in the snow, what there would be to satisfy his immortal soul in a great-coat or a blazing fire. Or I might ask the questioner himself, as he sat down to breakfast, what there is to satisfy his immortal soul in coffee and broiled ham. We are not merely immortal souls—at present. To relieve the physical necessities of men is an act of Divine charity. The cup of cold water will not do much for "the immortal soul," but it will not miss the Divine reward. I decline to follow the example of some over-refined commentators who spiritualise the petition in which Christ taught His disciples to ask for their daily bread. He who wrought a miracle to satisfy the physical hunger of men will not think that I am forgetting my "immortal soul" if I offer the prayer in its plain sense. But my physical wants are the poorest and meanest of all the cravings of that wonderful nature which God has given me. The intellect has higher necessities. These, too, I may ask God to remember and to satisfy.

It is mere *ennui* or a morbid form of the religious life which induces a man to turn away with disgust from the pleasant things of this world. There is a worldliness which is Christian, and a distaste for the world which is very un-Christian. With a healthy body and a healthy faith in God, eye and ear will find a thousand delights. The morning light will be beautiful and the perfume of flowers and the songs of birds. The verses of poets will have an infinite charm; and the voices of noble singers and the pictures of great artists will be to us among the dear gifts of God—dear for their own sakes and dear for the sake of Him from whom they came. We shall value the wisdom of ancient centuries, and shall watch with keen and sympathetic excitement the brilliant intellectual achievements of our own times. We shall be thankful if we are able to visit famous cities, and the rivers and mountains of remote lands; we shall be still more thankful for the dearer joys of home. The music of our children's voices will be sweet to us, and the light in the eyes we love.

And yet we shall not be Pagans, finding our rest in visible and transitory things. They will satisfy the powers and capacities to which they are related, and we shall not in a spirit of querulous discontent refuse to enjoy the satisfactions they are intended to bring. We shall take them for what they are, rejoicing in them, being thankful for them, acknowledging them as proofs of the Divine love and care. But over the common earth will bend the Heaven of God. The streams of earthly joy, beautiful in themselves, will carry us onward to the ocean of eternal blessedness. Sometimes there may be in us a certain discontent, a momentary impatience for the more regal powers and the diviner peace of the infinite future; but this will not be because we find no satisfaction in the pleasant things of this world, but because having found the present life so lovely and so fair we are filled with vague wonder and boundless hope by the assurance that the next life is to be lovelier and fairer still. The discontent will be checked and the impatience repressed, for we shall remember that already we dwell in God.

There are, no doubt, other aspects of human life, and the Christian faith has words for those that mourn and that have a right to mourn, as well as for those who ought to be happy. Sometimes our homes are desolate, we are worn down with care, the brain is too weary, the heart too troubled, to find any joy in the delights of other years. It is not always possible, even for those whose faith is strongest, to "rejoice in tribulations." "Christian worldliness" is inconsistent with the fanaticism which bids us be indifferent to the calamities of life, as well as with the fanaticism which bids us be indifferent to its pleasures. The gospel does not require us to dull our sensibility to transitory pain any more than it requires us to dull our sensibility to transitory happiness. It recognises the reality of the suffering, but tells us that "our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." For the miseries which we make for ourselves there is little comfort to be found in God; for the miseries which we cannot escape the Divine love affords infinite consolation.

CHAPTER XV.

SOWING AND REAPING.

IT is not safe to assume that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Righteousness and sin always yield their harvests; the moral results of all our actions—of the least as well as of the greatest—are determined by definite and irresistible laws. But as soon as we descend into the lower provinces of human life the steadfastness of the Divine order seems to fail us, and nothing is certain. There is a great deal of sowing which is followed by no reaping. The seed rots in the ground; the young wheat is blighted; the harvest, just when it is touched by the autumn sun, is destroyed by storms.

We can make sure of nothing except the supreme ends of life, and this should be taken for granted in all our plans and expectations. A young merchant may resolve to build up a great fortune. He may have all the capital he needs and a perfect mastery of his business: he may be honest, diligent, alert, prudent. And after he has worked hard for twenty years a great commercial catastrophe may ruin in a month the results of all his industry and skill. Or a young politician may resolve to win high political office. He may be animated—not by personal ambition—but by a genuine patriotism, and an unselfish desire to render service to the State. Everything may seem to be in his favour. He may have an ample fortune and adequate intellectual power. He may be laborious, fearless, and upright. Year by year his knowledge of public affairs may become more varied and more exact; and year by year he may win increasing popularity. But success is not certain. Some physical infirmity, which was unsuspected in early manhood, may begin to show itself, just as he is reaching the maturity of his strength; or some fatal defect of temper; or in the vicissitudes of public affairs a grave difference of opinion emerges between himself and his party; or he has a serious illness from which he never quite recovers; or he meets with an accident, slight in itself, which incapacitates him for the public service; and as far as the great object is concerned, on which he has concentrated all his energy, he is baffled and defeated.

The same uncertainty menaces men in every pursuit. A surgeon acquires a unique knowledge of some special form of disease and a skill as an operator which seems almost supernatural. For fifteen or twenty years he has sacrificed everything to his noble profession. He has been distrusted, and has endured distrust with unflinching courage. He has been thwarted by professional jealousy, and has kept his temper sweet and generous. He has lived a hard and anxious life, but has never stooped to mean and ignoble methods of improving his fortunes. At last his loyal devotion to science, and his generous passion for the relief of suffering, seem on the point of yielding a splendid harvest. His magnificent skill is acknowledged. He has secured the public confidence, which he always deserved. A great position has been fairly won—a position which gives him wealth, reputation, and, what he values more than either, the opportunity of immense usefulness. And just then he happens to be in a railway accident, or is thrown out of a Hansom, and he receives a nervous shock which makes his hand unsteady and his eye untrue. He has been sowing for years, but he never reaps.

Human life has still sadder experiences than these. You may try to get a harvest of affection from your children and friends ; but your seed is sown on the "way-side," and those whose love you most long for, and try most earnestly to win, forget your kindest words as soon as they are spoken, your kindest services as soon as they are done. Or your seed is sown on "rocky places ;" there is a prompt and cordial response to your affection, but there is no "deepness of earth"—no capacity for strong and enduring love ; the love is a passing impulse, and its strength is soon spent. Or your seed is sown "among thorns ;" the cares of life or its pleasures so fill the heart and mind that in the crowd of less gentle and less noble interests you and your love are forgotten. All these things happen to God in His endeavours to win *our* love and confidence; they happen to *us* in our endeavours to win the love and confidence of others. In those provinces of life which lie below the eternal and the Divine we cannot be sure that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

There are times when we say bitter words about the uncertainty and confusion of human affairs. We turn cynical. What is the use of working hard if we cannot make sure of the reward of our labour? Why practise self-denial if we are not certain that anything will come of it? Why qualify ourselves for positions which we may never fill? What practical wisdom is there in laying down plans of life which cover many years, when we are at the mercy of innumerable accidents which in a moment may bring all our schemes to nothing? Why should we take trouble to serve others who, for anything we know, will be ungrateful for all our love and service?

But the disorder which God permits in the lower provinces of human life is a part of that wise and kindly severity by which He disciplines the race for eternal righteousness and eternal joy. The confusion and the uncertainty warn us against spending our strength for objects which are below the true height of our nature and destiny. The low levels of life are swept by destructive floods, are smitten with fatal blight; they are unfenced and unprotected, and are open to the incursions of marauding tribes. What we sow *there* we are never certain of reaping. But the eternal fields are within our reach; in these we are sure of golden harvests.

God is the only Master who always gives His servants the wages they work for. Work for wealth; it may slip from your hands just when you think that you have achieved the most splendid success. Discipline yourself for professional eminence, and when you are just reaching the height of your hopes you may have a ruinous fall. Resolve to serve the State, and after years of honest preparation the opportunity of service may never come. Try to win the affection of those dearest to your heart, and you may be cruelly disappointed. But serve God, and you cannot fail. Serve Him in your business, and every hour you spend in your counting-house or in your works—whether you make money or lose it—will increase your treasure in Heaven. Serve God in your profession, and whether you are successful or not in your professional life, every year of labour will discipline you for the higher activities on the other side of death. In your schemes for serving the public, let it be your supreme object to serve Him, and though you may never be appointed to the obscurest administrative office, and may never exert any appreciable influence on the course of public affairs, you will make sure of honourable distinctions and honourable functions in the kingdom of God. Serve your children and your friends for the sake of serving Him, and though you may win from them no affection and gratitude, you will hear from the lips of Christ the surprising words:

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these . . . ye did it unto Me. Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

In a world like this, how is it that men who believe in the living God, and whose thoughts wander through eternity, can be indifferent to the glorious ages which are their inheritance in Christ, and to the Will which is their supreme law? Even where emotion is touched and imagination kindled by the solemnities and grandeurs of God's invisible and eternal kingdom conduct is often withdrawn from its control. A life of faultless morality, as well as a life of degrading vice, may be uninspired by reverence for God's eternal righteousness and by gratitude for God's eternal love. Deeds good in themselves may be done without regard to Him who has the right to our perfect and unreserved obedience. It may be only by accident that they coincide with the Divine will. They may be done to discharge claims arising out of the transient relationships of this life, and to fulfil laws which we should recognise as authoritative if we had never caught sight of the throne of God and had no prevision of the world beyond death. There may be practical Atheism where there is theoretical faith in the Divine existence and authority. The disappearance of God from the creed would have no effect on life and character. But if there is nothing of the eternal and the Divine in our earthly conduct, we are sowing no seed from which we have a right to expect a Divine and eternal harvest. The connection between sowing and happy reaping is uncertain and precarious, except for those who have passed into the kingdom of God and who have received the life of God, who have made the Divine thought and purpose the law of all their actions and the ground of all their hopes.

The harvest they are sowing to-day may not be ready to-morrow or the day after, but "in due season" they will reap if they faint not. I will not press the words as far as to say that there is nothing to be hoped for till the "season" comes for reaping that eternal harvest which is absolutely certain. Many Christian people can say with Oliver Cromwell, "I have had plentiful wages beforehand, and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite."

> "How can they reckon up the grace
> Each hour, each moment brings?
> How store Thy gifts? how find a place
> For all their precious things?
>
> "O boundless treasure, all unearned!
> O wages given for nought!
> Bestowed ere once their hearts have yearned,
> Ere once their hands have wrought."[1]

But it may sustain the courage and constancy of others to be reminded that the great harvest which they are sowing is to be reaped in the sunlit fields of immortality. There are good men to whom in this world the calm and golden autumn never comes. For them the tree of life does not yield its fruit every month. They seem to labour in vain and to spend their strength for nought. Their life is one prolonged winter, or at best an ungenial spring. They have hardly any sunshine, and instead of the kindly heat of summer in which they might ripen to a beautiful righteousness, they are exposed to keen and cruel winds. One dreary season follows another; there is nothing to break the depressing monotony of the cloudy, cheerless years. They plough the same fields over and over again, and the soil is heavy and the ploughing is hard work. They try to clean the ground, but the roots of the weeds refuse to be torn out, and after all their labour the stones seem to be as thick as when they began. They sow good seed, but sow in tears, and they wonder whether the tender green will ever show itself above the bare brown earth.

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[1] T. H. Gill.

Let them not despair. The sure promise of God will not be broken. The law of the eternal kingdom will not fail. Let them not grow "weary in well-doing." Let them not become impatient. Impatient! why should they be? Suppose that they have to live a life of sixty or seventy years, ploughing and sowing, in dreary, dismal weather, with dark days and cold nights—what are their labours compared with the everlasting harvest? Let one good deed follow another; let every brave triumph over temptation give heart and courage for the conflict which follows it; let the ascent of one mountain height of moral and spiritual achievement be accepted as little more than the discovery of a loftier height beyond; they have need of endurance, but the end will crown all. In far-off worlds, in far-off ages, among triumphant saints, in the presence of an approving God, they will reap at last the golden harvest of their well-doing.

When we take sides with God, God takes sides with us. Work done for God is never wasted. This truth has very wide applications. With some qualifications it holds good in reference to other harvests than those which are to be reaped in our own personal righteousness and joy. Work of every kind that God cares for is done in alliance with God's eternal wisdom and strength. No doubt God Himself is baffled by the waywardness, the folly, and the sin of men. He sows seed in rocky hearts, in hearts trodden hard by the passing feet of this world's business and custom and pleasure, in hearts infested with the thorns of care and of wealth; and no harvest comes. *Our* endeavours to do good to men are certain to be hindered and defeated by the same causes; but it is a great thing to have God on our side.

And whenever men work for the fulfilment of a Divine law—even though they may not recognise it as Divine, and may therefore miss the personal rewards which would follow their service if they had meant to serve God—it is wonderful how their unconscious alliance with the Divine righteousness and love augments their strength and contributes to their success. I find in this a certain consolation for much of the unfaithfulness of the Christian Church. Those who mean to serve God neglect very much of the work which God wants to have done, and their neglected tasks are taken up by those who never meant to serve Him. Fragments of God's thought come to men who have no knowledge of God Himself. Isolated precepts of His law constrain the obedience of men who have never made His will the universal law of life. They sow the good seed not knowing to whom it belongs ; not knowing for whom they are working ; and the seed yields glorious harvests.

This is specially true in the province of social and political reform. We are most certain to succeed if we are consciously endeavouring to get the Divine will done on earth as it is done in heaven ; but those who, without intending that this should be the result of their labours, are working on the lines of the Divine thought, achieve large success.

I am clear that the desponding tone in which some men are in the habit of speaking of all schemes for the improvement of the morality and the material condition of the nation is altogether unjustifiable. The law holds that, if we are not weary in well-doing, we reap if we faint not. To tell us that all generous effort is worthless, that things get no better, is to quench the fires of a noble enthusiasm, to paralyse conscientious labour for the public good, and it is to do dishonour to that beneficent alliance of the Divine love with common philanthropy which has actually lessened the evils which were the curse of earlier generations.

In due season we reap if we faint not. Read the accounts of the flagrant injustice which disgraced the administration of the law in this country two or three centuries ago, and then say whether the patriots and statesmen who resolved that the injustice should cease have not been successful. Read the descriptions of the prisons of England a hundred years ago, and then say whether John Howard has not reaped the harvest which he laboured for. Read the horrible story of the tortures and agonies inflicted by the slave-trade at the close of the last century and the beginning of this, and then say whether it was for nothing that Wilberforce and Clarkson appealed to the humanity and justice of the English people to put a stop to it for ever.

Within the memory of living men, what great and happy changes have passed on the condition of the large masses of people in the manufacturing districts of the country! Their condition is still bad enough. During the last three winters many of them have suffered severely.[1] Many are still suffering from the prolonged depression of trade. There are many honest and industrious families whose permanent condition is terribly unsatisfactory, and who, in the best times, are barely able to free themselves from the burdens which they have incurred in times of stagnation and disaster. There is still a great deal of roughness, coarseness, and violence among some classes of our population, and among others a great deal of selfishness, extravagance, ostentation, and profligacy.

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[1] Written in 1882.

But the wide wastes of misery and despair have been largely reclaimed. The appalling growth of hereditary pauperism, which fifty years ago threatened an early exhaustion of our national resources and the destruction of all manly self-reliance and independence, has been checked. Periods of extreme distress recur less frequently, and the area of suffering is narrowed. The turbulence and the savagery of the early part of the century have almost disappeared; the mutual hatred which separated different classes from each other, the fierce jealousy with which a starving population regarded the wealthy, the inhuman scorn and contempt, not unmixed with fear, with which the wealthy regarded their miserable fellow-countrymen, have passed away.*

On matters of detail I cannot speak with any great confidence except for my own town. But what is true there must be true elsewhere. The houses in which large numbers of the people are living now are bad enough, and the shops in which large numbers of them are working now are bad enough. But when I compare the sanitary condition of the town to-day with the disgraceful negligence of thirty or forty years ago, which left whole districts to be the nests of foul and destructive diseases; when I compare the abundant supplies of wholesome water which are now generally within the reach of the people with the filthy wells, with sewage filtering into them, which were common in those times; when I compare the large, airy, light work-rooms in which thousands of the people are now working, with the close, poisonous atmosphere in which their fathers and mothers worked, and which I used to visit when my ministry began,—I can never say that the reformers have laboured in vain and spent their strength for nought.

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* For decisive proof of the improvement in the condition of the people during the last fifty years, see the remarkable address of Mr. Giffen to the Statistical Society in the autumn of 1883.

Read the preface which Charles Kingsley prefixes to one of the later editions of "Alton Locke." He says that very much that was contained in that vehement and noble appeal for justice and mercy to the poor had become obsolete. The battle was largely won. The worst evils against which he fought had passed away.

It is hardly possible to run by railway through the poorer districts of any of the great towns in the kingdom without seeing the conspicuous monuments and illustrations of the success of a still more recent movement for the public welfare. Every Board

School rising above the humbler roofs which shelter our great working-class population should rebuke the despondency and renew the courage of those who are labouring for any Social Reform. About the merits of the School Board system, and about its administration, there are still divisions of opinion which I need not discuss; but those to whom the system is most hateful may learn from it the lesson I am anxious to enforce. Fourteen years ago more than half the children in most of our great towns were in no school at all. Many of the schools at which the rest attended were worthless. Religious zeal, sustained and guided by the State, had accomplished great results; but for half-a-century there had been a demand for large measures of educational reform. About the year 1866 or 1867 a few men, inspired with a genuine zeal for popular education, combined together, and, taking up the work of their predecessors, they resolved to make a passionate assault on the indifference and despair of the public mind. They were men without any great public position, and without the resources which are commonly supposed to be necessary to produce any great and immediate impression on national policy. They encountered fierce opposition, but they met it with a light heart, seeing before them the harvest which would come if they were not weary in well-doing. And already there is hardly a child in the kingdom for whom there is not a place in a fairly good school; and that compulsory law which, a little more than ten years ago, was denounced in every part of the country as foreign to the temper and traditions of the English people, and certain, if put in force, to provoke popular resistance and tumult, is working quietly and peacefully; and, while inflicting some hardships on individual families, is bringing the whole of our children under civilizing and elevating influences.

It is in the highest work of all that there seems to be the gravest reason for despondency. Many weary centuries have gone by, and the vessel of the Church is still in mid-ocean, labouring heavily and beaten with storms. The happy shores for which she is sailing seem as far off as ever. In the Christian work which lies nearest to every one of us there is very much to chasten the exultation of hope with which, perhaps, most of us began it. To measure the harvest which we have already reaped against the zeal, and energy, and thoughtfulness, and solicitude with which we have laboured, is, indeed, a perilous business. It may be that those of us who have been least successful have no great occasion for surprise. In work of this kind it is the quality, not the amount, of work that tells. And if we have been successful at all—successful, I mean, in winning the trust of a few men for Christ, in persuading them to accept His will as their highest law, in enriching their knowledge of God, in ennobling their conception of Christian righteousness; if we have been successful, here and there, in finding some solitary sheep that had been lost, and successful in keeping a very little flock from going astray—the results of our work are of infinite value. There is no proportion between the worth of our labour and what, through God's infinite goodness, we have been permitted to accomplish.

And however bitter may be our disappointments, we are in the presence of a Divine sorrow which silences our complaints. He who laid aside His eternal glory and died on the cross at the impulse of His love for mankind and His love of righteousness, has not forsaken the world which He died to save. Our work is His rather than ours; our successes are His, and His are our defeats. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man," and if no harvest comes, or seems to come, we should think of His grief rather than of our own.

XVI.

THE UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST.[1]

THERE are many parts of the book of Revelation which I do not profess to understand. Here and there, at times, the golden haze of symbolism has seemed to melt away, or rather the visions have seemed to take a firm and solid and enduring form; but there are many passages in the book which, to me at least, are absolutely and altogether mysterious. It does not follow, however, that even these passages are without great and precious uses. It is not necessary to reduce a Divine revelation to an exact and logical form, in order to receive from it consolation and strength, and even guidance. Some of the most glorious expressions of the Divine power and goodness refuse to be subjected to any rigorous interpretation. I have often sat among the hills of Cumberland, and watched the sun go down in the distant sea. I have seen the glow which comes with the brief twilight on the Nile, when the whole heaven is filled with rose and violet, melting away into the purest white, and then into depths of transparent purple. I have listened to the solemn music of the tide rolling in upon a lonely coast in the twilight, and to the song of the lark in the English sky and over the hills of Judea. I have been filled with awe by the majestic forms of the Alps, and by the stern grandeur of the granite cliffs of Sinai. If I were asked what these things meant, I could not tell. If I were asked to translate these sounds and visions into exact propositions, to define their meaning, to give them a logical and coherent form, I could not do it. But for all that, they have given me larger conceptions of the greatness and goodness of God. They have lifted me, when I have been in a devout mood, beyond themselves. Without understanding them, I find them to be true revelations of the unseen and eternal; and through them, as through the majestic outer courts of a vast temple, I pass into the inner sanctuary; the earthly music is silent; the material splendours are dissolved, and I find myself in the presence of God.

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[1] A sermon on Rev. xix. 12: "*Upon His head were many crowns*" (A. V.); preached in St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Westbourne Grove, Nov. 23rd, 1873.

And so there are visions in this book, in the attempt to interpret which the understanding is perplexed, but which are full of inspiration and of power. If I begin to ask questions, I find that the questions receive no adequate answer. Have the visions a direct reference to past conflicts between the truth and love of God on the one hand and the falsehood and miseries of mankind on the other? or do they point to conflicts yet to come? I do not know. Are they fulfilled already? If they are, will they be fulfilled again? I cannot tell. The adverse powers which are cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone—are they systems of imperial tyranny, or are they systems of commercial selfishness? Or are they cruel and gloomy forms of heathenism, or are they corruptions of the Christian faith? Who can say? But of this I am sure, that these stormy and gorgeous visions reveal to me a Divine presence and energy in conflict with all the worst evils which afflict our race, Divine anger, sternly punishing and relentlessly consuming all that is evil, Divine righteousness redressing the injustice of human affairs, Divine mercy pitying our sorrows, Divine grace recovering mankind from sin and restoring them to purity and to blessedness; and so, in the midst of the confusion and tumult and uncertainty of this world's condition, I am at rest, for the victory at last will be on the side of goodness, of justice, of truth.

I do not know the exact reference of the vision recorded in this chapter; I cannot tell whether it refers to some great and critical conflict between the power of Christ and everything that is hostile to Him—the final struggle which will end in perfect and everlasting victory, or whether it is a concentrated and vivid representation of the prolonged struggle which has been going on for eighteen centuries, is proceeding still, and will not close until the whole earth is subdued under the power of Christ. In any case, the vision should fill our hearts with joy and strength; it is a translation into terms which appeal to the imagination, of the great promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" and I single out a particular element in the vision, "On His head are many crowns," and I find in it not only joy, but suggestions for the guidance of the work of the Church and for the right ordering of our individual lives.

The image is not a familiar one. To us, perhaps, it is not a very natural one. We are not accustomed to imagine more than one crown on one head. But when I was in Egypt lately I saw, again and again, among the figures sculptured on the walls of ancient temples, an illustration of this vision. Egypt is separated into two great divisions, Upper and Lower Egypt. The two districts were at times governed by rival sovereigns, and the crowns they wore were very distinct in form; but, in the period of Egypt's greatest glory, the whole country was united under the same king; and on the head of a great monarch like Rameses the Second, or Rameses the Third, and on the head of the chief gods, like Osiris, for instance, you see the crowns both of the Upper and the Lower country, symbolically declaring their sovereignty over both. And when, in this vision, John saw many crowns on the head of Christ, it was a symbolic revelation of the extent and variety of the kingdoms over which He rules. Kingdoms which had been governed by conflicting monarchs; races ruled by different traditions; provinces remote from each other and dissimilar, are alike subject to His authority, and are alike to enjoy the blessings of His reign. Heaven and earth, angels and men, are included under His glorious sovereignty; He is not only Lord and King, He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." In this vision He is represented as moving forward to the subjugation of the empire over which He has been enthroned, making war against all the powers that are in revolt against His authority; and we might find in it great encouragement in the enterprise to which the Church is committed, of winning the whole world for Christ. That enterprise is not ours so much as His; and as, in the hour of battle, armies are said to have sometimes seen in the heavens the forms of supernatural warriors rushing with them against the foe, so we, in our great crusade, may look up and see the very form of Christ, Captain and King, leading the hosts of the Church, against His foes and ours.

But I propose to make a somewhat different application of the vision this morning. In times of deep religious earnestness, many Christian people are apt to forget the most obvious principles by which their conduct ought to be governed; and the very intensity of their desire to serve Christ perfectly causes them to overlook the actual service to which He has appointed them. When we speak of Christ's ultimate reign over all the world, we do not always remember what this means. It surely means not only that all men will confess His authority and rejoice in His salvation; but that, in all the various provinces of human life, men will be governed by His laws, and that, in all the forms of their activity they will perpetually reveal their loyalty to Him and their love. We may not only speak of the various races of mankind as the kingdoms over which Christ will reign, and the crowns of which are already on His head; we may also speak of the various departments of human life as constituting different kingdoms in which the authority of Christ must be acknowledged and His laws obeyed. Christ is to rule over our commercial life, over our literature, over our home life, as well as over our spiritual life; and it is a legitimate use of the symbolism of this vision to insist that the sovereignty of Him on whose head are many crowns is to be recognised and honoured in all these various regions of our activity.

The first impulse of some persons when they begin to be in real earnest about serving Christ is to look at a great part of their life with sorrow, and to feel bitter regret that so much time should be, as they think, alienated from Christ's service and from the great ends of the religious life. The young clerk, for instance, thinks of the hours which he has to spend at the desk, and is troubled that he has not more time, as he would say, to give to Christ. The tradesman thinks of his shop, and is distressed that this world's affairs should necessarily consume so much of his thought and energy, and that he has so little to give to God. Poor women, servants, labouring men, think of the nine, or ten, or twelve hours a day during which they are occupied in household work, or in looking after their children, or in exhausting physical labour—they look upon these hours as a kind of desert, in which the fair fruits of the religious life cannot flourish, or as a kind of profane territory which cannot be consecrated to God. Now, what I ask you to remember this morning is that on the head of Christ are many crowns—that not only all nations are His, but that all the occupations of human life are His. He is King of all the world, and therefore King of our homes, King of our trade, King of our literature, King of every province of the life of man. His kingdom is not shut in by narrow bounds; it extends over all space and over all time. He rules not only within these walls, but within the walls of our own homes, rules in the schoolroom, rules in the workshop, rules in the merchant's office, rules wherever Christian men can go, and over whatever Christian men can do. Every one of us that desires to serve Christ can give Him not fragments of our life, an hour here and an hour there, but the whole of life from first to last. Whatever we do, whatever we say, whether we buy or sell, whether we work with the brain or work with the hand, in private and in public life, whatever we do, we are to do it to the Lord.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Here is a young man with a real genius for art, for painting, for music, for poetry. He is suddenly arrested by the discovery of his sin, and of the appalling ruin to which he is exposed as long as sin is unrepented of, unforsaken, unforgiven. He finds rest at last in the revelation of the infinite mercy of God to our race, through the life and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he devotes himself to the service of God. Should he give up his art? God forbid! Sometimes, no doubt, a man has a call to separate himself altogether to spiritual work; but the faculty for that work does not exist in all men, and to all men the call to that work does not come. Is the artist to think of his art as something alien and foreign to his religious life, and of the time that he gives to it as so much time withdrawn from the service of Christ? Why should he? Let him remember that on the head of Christ are many crowns, and let him crown the Lord Jesus King of his art, serve Him in the painting-room as well as here, at his easel as well as on his knees; with his brush in beautiful lines and colours, as well as in hymns and prayers. If you ask me how you are to do this, the answer is very obvious. God has given you, if you are a true artist, an eye to see beauty and picturesqueness of form and of colour where we cannot see them. Tell us on canvas about the loveliness you have found in quiet glens, in the forest, and by the sea; let us know more about the glory of the mountains which God has built, and of the sky which He fills with so pure a blue, and over which He draws the pomp of His curtains of cloud. Be God's minister to us, interpreting the mysteries and illustrating the beauty of the book of nature, as I am God's minister, interpreting the mysteries and illustrating the beauty of this other book, in which we have recorded a revelation of another kind. Christ made the world, and all that is in it. Through the artist we are to discover, in the work of Christ, a grace, a majesty, and a nobleness which otherwise we should have never known. And the artist gives to those of us who can seldom escape from towns, something of the refreshment and joy which God intended us to receive from direct communion with His own works. Look at some of the pictures of my late townsman, David Cox, and you almost feel the fresh wind blowing on your face. Look at a Harvest Field of Linnell's, and here, in London, in the chill of November fogs or January frost, you feel the warm August sun upon you, and are with the reapers among the hills of Surrey. And there are touches of humour, and of kindliness, in domestic scenes, which, caught by the eye of the artist and transferred to the canvas, help to sweeten care and to give cheerfulness and brightness to the monotony of human life. The true artist can give to a childless home the laughter of children, and can make us in our strength look with new tenderness on the sorrows of old age. Never think of art as though it were a province of human life lying outside the limits within which Christ reigns. Remember that He is the King of art, and in your artistic life render to Him loyal service.

And so I might speak of music, and illustrate the same principle in relation to that. But most of us have to spend our strength in regions less imaginative and lovely than these—in trade, and in manufacture, and in the occupations of domestic life. Let us be thankful that over all of them Christ is King. Yes, He is King of industry as well as art. Over our industrial occupations He asserts His authority, and in pursuing them we render Him service. Is it not so? Take the trade of a builder. Is there any more Christian occupation than to give shelter to the homeless on a winter's night, when the hail, and the snow, and the north wind are making the condition of the homeless most desolate? Well, but we should all be homeless all the year round if there were none to build houses for us. Christ has appointed those of you who may happen to be carpenters and builders to do that. See that you make the foundations honest, and the walls strong, and the roof water-tight, remembering that under whatever earthly master you may seem to work, Christ is the real Master whom you have first of all to please. Is there any more Christian work than to clothe the naked? But we should all be naked but for cotton spinners, and cloth weavers, and the people that trade in cotton goods and cloth goods, and that prepare them for our use. See that you make the material good and strong, and, if your customers will let you, the form graceful and beautiful. Is there any more Christian work than to feed the hungry? But we should all starve but for the farmers that grow the corn, and the sailors that bring it to us from Canada and the Black Sea, the merchants that carry on the trade, the millers that grind the corn, and the bakers that make it into bread.

I might go through all the trades which occupy your ingenuity and task your strength, and show that to a Christian man every legitimate occupation, legitimately carried on, may be a service rendered to man in Christ's name. He is the King of industry and of trade, and in all industry and trade we ought to be serving Him. You may give a bedstead to a poor woman who cannot pay for it. That is a Christian act. But people that can pay for bedsteads want them just as much as those that cannot, and it is a Christian act to make them for us too. The payment is but a subordinate element in the transaction, and is just as good for those who make the payment as for those who receive it. You send a present of fruit to a sick person who is very poor. That is an act of Christian kindness. But if there were no fruit shops, many of us who are not poor would get no fruit, and it is Christ's will that you should help us to get it who can pay as well as those who cannot. If men of business would look at their business in this light, and get it transfigured and glorified by considering it in its relations to Christ, the corrupting influences of trade would soon disappear. They would not be less successful than those who carry on their business from purely selfish motives, and their business would become a positive means of grace. You need not give up your trade, if it is an honest one, to serve Christ. Serve Him in the trade itself, and remember that in trade, as in everything besides, He is King.

And He is King of the province of public life, too; and in politics, whether imperial or local, Christian men should still be serving and honouring Him. I know that this is regarded by some excellent people as a province of life which is utterly unreclaimable, given over to the devil, never to be subdued to the sceptre of Christ, or regulated by His laws; but for myself, I should as soon think of giving up a particular race of men, the Chinese, or the people of New Guinea, for instance, as beyond the reach of Christian grace. "On His head are many crowns." He claims to rule over all races, the lowest as well as the highest, and over all the occupations and interests of humanity, politics among the rest. I had a good little book sent me a little while ago, by some simple-minded, devout person. Indeed, good little books are often sent to me by Christian people, who seem somehow to have a kindly feeling for me, but who look with suspicion and disapprobation on many things that I do; and sometimes they are kind enough to write me letters, in which they express both their anxiety and their good-will. And on this little book there were written these very curious words—"There are no politics in heaven: there is where your life should be; sad, sad, that it is otherwise." Now, that was very kindly meant, but can you imagine anything much more absurd? You might as well write to the chief physician of the Westminster Hospital, and say to him, "There are no hospitals in heaven: there is where your life should be; sad, sad, that it is otherwise." Or to the chairman of the London and North-Western Railway Company, and say, "There are no railways in heaven: there is where your life should be; sad, sad, that it is otherwise." I should not wonder if the good Christian person who sent me this admonition, sometimes gathers poor people together, and gives them tea and good little books; and I might write to her and say, "There are no tea-meetings and good little books in heaven: there is where your life should be; sad, sad, that it is otherwise." No politics in heaven! Well, I suppose not; but there are no agricultural labourers there living on twelve shillings a week, whose condition political action may perhaps ameliorate. There are no hereditary paupers there, born to live a life of weakness, and helplessness, and wretchedness, who by political action may perhaps be raised into living a manly, honourable, and self-reliant life. There are no gaols in heaven, to which little children, born perhaps of criminal parents, are sent for an offence committed in ignorance, and where they are trained to a life of crime. In heaven there are no unjust wars to be prevented, no cruel, reckless ambition to be curbed by the will and power of a free people. Politics un-Christian! Why, the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies was a political act, and it was done mainly by Christian people in direct obedience to the authority of Him who, according to the old prophecy, was to listen to the cry of the oppressed, and to break in pieces the oppressor. The repeal of the Corn Laws was a political act, and it was almost a repetition of the miracle of Christ when He multiplied the loaves in the wilderness, because the people were faint from want of bread. Christ is the King of our political life, and in that, as in every other province of our activity, we have to serve and to honour Him. It was a miracle of mercy when He laid His hand on those struck by fever, and cured them; and by going on to Boards of Works and into Town Councils, and improving the drainage of our great towns, and removing the causes of fever, men are but following in Christ's footsteps. To make men sober is a Christian work, and the work may partly be done by resisting the combinations of liquor sellers, who in some parts of England are anxious to seize on every public office in order that they may the better resist the movement for diminishing facilities for drinking. To have your own house governed honestly, and to have it kept clean and wholesome, is a Christian duty; and to get your city honestly governed, and kept clean and wholesome, is a Christian duty too.

There are no politics in heaven, but there are many things on earth that are to pass away with this world, through which men are prepared for everlasting glory. There is no sorrow there, but it is by the bitterness of earthly sorrow that we are disciplined for heavenly joy. There is no suffering there, but in relieving the distresses of the suffering poor we are securing the approbation of Christ, who will say to us, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." There is no trading there, but it is by resisting the temptations of trade that we are strengthened for the exercise of an immortal virtue. This world's affairs are but the scaffolding of the great temple which God is building, and which is to be filled at last with His glory. If we remember, and act on the remembrance, that art, trade, politics, all the departments of human life, are to be made subordinate to God's great design, then these activities are not only lawful, they are part of our Christian service; the scaffolding will some day disappear, but not till the temple is complete.

And now, finally, passing by other provinces of human life, over all which Christ claims to rule, let me remind you that Christ is King of the spiritual life of man. We admit this without hesitation. We are so familiar with it that it seems hardly to require thought. And yet much of the weakness and much of the sorrow of Christian people arise from forgetting it. He is King, I say, of our spiritual life. This is the very palace in which He reigns, the very sanctuary of the temple, all whose courts are consecrated to Him. He is King, and to Him, therefore, we should offer perpetual homage and worship. When we speak to Him, we should speak not only of our trouble, of our weakness, of our weariness; we should remember His greatness, and should rejoice in it. Why is it that some people find no comfort and strength from speaking to Christ? Because they do not apprehend how great, how strong, how glorious He is. He is only a human friend to them; He is not a Divine presence. He is one who sympathises as a brother might; He is not one who can help as God only can. He is King, and we have to give Him reverence as well as trust, homage as well as love.

He is King, and in the order and discipline of our spiritual life we have to recognise His authority, and to recognise only His. Even Christian people often endeavour to regulate and to perfect their spiritual nature by other laws than His, and this is to forget His supreme and inviolable rights. If you attempt to aid the development of religious sentiment by a merely sensuous worship, you forget that in ordering your religious life you have to recognise Christ's authority and Christ's only. If you feel, as I believe multitudes of men feel in these days, that the lives of some saintly men who were severely ascetic have a greater spiritual charm than the simple story of the Life of Christ given in the Four Gospels, and present a nearer approach to your idea of what true sanctity is; and if you strive to conform yourselves to this artificial sanctity instead of striving to live in the love of God and in the love of man, and to go about eating and drinking and doing good as Christ did, you are unfaithful to Christ's authority in the region even of your spiritual life. Look, too, at much of the devotional writing which has been produced in our times, and which has so fatal a fascination for numbers of weak people. See how the hymns that congregations are singing nowadays fondle Christ, address Him in terms in which you would never address even a man for whom you had any deep reverence and any real respect. Why, people who talk to Christ in that way forget that Christ is King, that He is not to be fondled, but to be reverenced, not to be spoken to in terms of endearment of a kind that you would not use to your equals, but in terms of homage, such as He has a right to claim who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

He is King—not merely the Example of holiness, the Helper of infirmity, the Sacrifice for sins, our Prophet, our Brother, our Friend—He is King. To the spirit of man He speaks with authority; He claims its homage, He demands its obedience, He requires the tribute of its choicest and noblest treasure. All forms of earthly service and reverence are but imperfect symbols of the service and reverence which He claims from the soul of man. The awe and devout fear with which we bow down before

God are His; for He is God manifest in the flesh The reverence of the conscience for the eternal law of righteousness is His; for in Him that law has a personal life, and by Him its authority is sustained. The homage which the heart should render to supreme spiritual glory is His; for His own life is the Divine ideal of human perfection and He is the eternal fountain of all that is morally beautiful and noble on earth and in heaven.

Let us serve Him; He has served us. In ourselves, in our own character, there are provinces of His kingdom in revolt against His authority; and wherever there is revolt against Christ, there is confusion, misery, and shame. Let our lives, from their centre to their furthermost limits, be subdued under His power, and offer the homage of a happy loyalty to His throne; and then province after province, now full of desolation, disorder, and misery, shall be fair as the garden of God, and filled with the glory in which the nations of the saved walk for ever above. He blesses all those over whom He rules, and the measure of our obedience to Him is the measure of the blessing He confers; nay, the blessing goes far beyond the proportions of our obedience. Only let us yield Him an honest though imperfect service, and in the greatness of His bounty our whole life shall be filled with the glory of His beneficent reign.

XVII.

ON OBEYING CHRIST

WHAT is it to obey Christ? The question appears to be an extremely simple one; but it is possible to suppose that we are obeying Christ when we are really refusing Him any effective authority over our moral life.

I.

There are, for example, many excellent people who read the four Gospels in order to ennoble their own conceptions of righteousness. They would say frankly, if they were asked, and without any suspicion that they were not acknowledging the great claims of Christ, "Conscience is our supreme authority, but the life and teaching of Christ educate conscience, make its vision keener, purify and exalt its ideal of perfection. We keep the commandments of Christ because we see for ourselves that they are lofty and good." But this is not the same thing as obeying Christ.

For what is the essence of obedience? Take a case. If a man over whom you have no authority consults you about how a piece of work ought to be done, you do not complain that he is disobedient if he declines to follow your directions. If you do not convince him that your way is the best, you say that he is a dull man; if you convince him and he does the work in some other way which does not involve so much trouble, you say that he is a lazy man or a fool. There is no possibility either of obedience or of disobedience where there is no authority.

But suppose one of your own workmen, one of your own servants, asks you the same question, and you answer it—the case is altogether different. He may think that your way involves a waste of labour, a waste of time, a waste of expense. He may not be able to see that it is better than his own way; but he is not at liberty to refuse to follow your directions. It would be more satisfactory if he saw that your plan is better than his own; but whether he sees it or not he has to accept it. You are his master, and he has no choice.

If I keep Christ's commandments only because I have come to see for myself that they are wise and good, I do not obey *Him*. If I recognise His authority, I shall keep His commandments before I recognise that they are either good or wise.

The conscience is instructed and developed by the writings of the great moral teachers, and by the lives of many good men; but no ethical treatise, no saintly biography, holds the same place in relation to the moral life as the four Gospels. Archdeacon Paley may teach me in what sense a promise is to be kept, and he may remind me of invaluable sedatives for soothing and quieting anger. I may act upon his teaching and be much the better for it; but I do not *obey* him, for he has no authority over me. He instructs my conscience, and I obey *that.* If we use Christ's teaching and history simply to ennoble our own conceptions of righteousness, and if these remain the supreme authority, we are obeying conscience—not Christ.

Half a century ago many unwise persons thought that children ought always to be shown the reasons for everything that they were required to do. This pernicious theory has happily lost its temporary popularity. It is obvious that children who were brought up under its influence could never be disciplined to obedience. But the inevitable conditions of human life must have made it impossible to translate the theory into practice. There are many things that can hardly be explained to a baby in long clothes. Even a child of six will not find it easy to understand why it should be compelled to take offensive medicine, or why any limit should be placed upon its innocent pleasures in the vineries and strawberry beds. It is doubtful whether even a boy of nine or ten can be made to understand why he should learn the multiplication table or the Latin declensions. He has to do it first, and to discover the reasons afterwards.

The same principle holds in relation to morals. If a child is not disciplined to truthfulness, industry, kindness, before he can see for himself the obligations of any of these virtues, the chances are that he will never see that lying, indolence, cruelty, are hateful vices. Compel him to be industrious, and he will discover for himself the obligations of industry; make it hard for him to lie, and he will discover for himself the obligations of truthfulness; use authority to accustom him to kindness, and he will discover for himself the wickedness of cruelty. In morals, practice comes before theory.

And so, if we obey Christ, His commandments will soon shine in their own light. "He that *followeth* Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is not by mere meditation that we come to see the real beauty and excellence of Christ's commandments; we must obey them before we see how beautiful and noble they are. We must actually *follow* Christ if we desire to have "the light of life;" if we decline to follow Him till the "light" comes we shall remain in darkness.

II.

To insist that no commandment that Christ has given is binding till we ourselves are able to recognise its obligations, is clearly and flagrantly inconsistent with the acknowledgment of His authority. There are some who make a nearer approach to obeying Him than this, and yet do not obey. Most men learn before they are thirty that conscience is developed very slowly. To discover duties when the time has gone by for discharging them is one of the saddest and, I suppose, one of the commonest experiences of human life. In early manhood we see that if our moral sense had been clearer and stronger in boyhood we should have avoided many follies and many sins. In middle life we look back with a sigh upon early manhood. Knowledge has come to us too late. Those who had the strongest claims upon our love, and whom we did not love, have passed away, and it is too late to atone for our coldness and neglect. We were unjust without knowing it; and those who suffered from our injustice, though living, are beyond our reach, and the harm we did them is irreparable. Wide areas of duty were altogether disregarded—disregarded, perhaps, through the very eagerness with which we gave our heart and strength to some of the great ends of life. And now we cannot go back; the years have gone by for ever in which those desolate wastes might have been made fertile and beautiful.

Happy are those who are born into households enriched with the moral traditions of many generations of high and noble living! A single generation cannot learn for itself the great laws of life; and it is not enough, therefore, to be born of parents whose hearts are loyal to duty and to God. The chances are that much of their wisdom came too late to be of much service to their children. It is only the slowly accumulated moral wealth transmitted by a long line of honourable ancestry that can avail. The higher forms of morality, like the higher forms of civilization, are the fruit of centuries of labour and meditation, of adventurous genius, of patient, unambitious, inglorious toil. As the tradition passes from parent to child the moral ideal becomes richer, loftier, more complete; every new generation is saved from some great mistake committed by its predecessor, and recognises from the first some duty which its predecessor had to discover for itself.

Few of us are the heirs of this blessed inheritance. In the moral order we belong to new families; we have had to make our own way; we have no pedigree. Or some near ancestor wasted the family estate; what had been accumulated before him was suddenly dissipated and lost, and his children were brought to ruin. We begin life with only a rudimentary knowledge of how we ought to live, and we learn nothing early enough to put it into practice.

This experience leads many men to confess that since Christ knows very much more about righteousness than they know, it is a duty to trust His larger knowledge and to follow His guidance, even when He leads them into paths which they would not have chosen for themselves. They accept His judgments on all moral questions against their own.

Christ says, "Love your enemies," "Resist not him that is evil." The duty is not self-evident. It is a man's natural impulse when he is struck to strike back, and to strike as hard as he can. The hot resentment is not only natural, it seems the kindling fire of a manly virtue. But Christ condemns it, and those who trust His judgment against their own try to quench the passion and to discipline themselves to the patient endurance of injury.

They also accept His judgment rather than their own of the *gravity* of certain moral offences. They can see for themselves that there is a want of graciousness and moral dignity in flinging about scornful, contemptuous, bitter words; but if in a moment of heat such words escape them, they think that the words have, after all, not much harm in them. But Christ says that they are very serious, and that by uttering them a man may incur the gravest guilt. "It was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But *I* say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." Those who have discovered how slowly conscience developes may be led by this discovery to trust Christ's moral estimates rather than their own, and to watch more anxiously against the heats of passion and against bitter and contemptuous words.

This is a great advance on the position of those who recognise no authority in Christ's precepts until they can see for themselves the evil of what they forbid, the righteousness of what they command. It is a great advance, but it is not enough. For this is nothing more than faith in the larger moral wisdom of Christ; it is not a recognition of His moral authority; and where there is no recognition of authority there can be no obedience.

A trust very similar to that which has been just described—the same in kind—may be wisely reposed in our fellow-men. It sometimes happens that a young manufacturer, merchant, or professional man finds himself in a position in which it is hard to reconcile his personal interests with the claims of others. He cannot measure these claims with any accuracy; still less can he determine how he should satisfy them. There are three or four courses open to him: one of them he promptly dismisses as involving quite unnecessary sacrifice; he is still perplexed about the others. He consults an older man than himself, a man of large experience, in whose judgment he has perfect faith. His friend tells him that he is bound to take the course which he has dismissed from his mind; it is the hardest, but the only right one. The young man cannot see why. The line of conduct on which his friend insists is legitimate, but he is not persuaded that it is obligatory. Still his friend maintains that it is the only right course; and the young man says, "I cannot see it, but I will trust your judgment rather than my own.

If you are sure this is what I ought to do, I will do it." That is a great proof of *confidence*, but it is not *obedience*. The younger man has faith in his friend's perception of what is morally right in complicated business questions, but if his friend asserted any authority over him he would at once resent it.

Christ does not come to us asking only for our confidence, as one who has a larger knowledge of moral duty than we have; He comes asserting authority and insisting on obedience. I do not know how to put it except by saying that He speaks to us as an objective conscience—a conscience outside of us—with an authority to which we are bound to submit.

III.

There is a light that lighteth every man; but it reaches us dim, broken, obscured. It shines more and more clearly as we are faithful to it, but even when we have been faithful for years we are troubled that the light is not steadier and stronger. That light is a revelation from heaven. It is a Divine word, translated very imperfectly into a human dialect which, at the best, has no resources for expressing acurately and fully the Divine meaning. Still it is Divine. It is a revelation of the eternal law of righteousness; and God's will and the eternal law of righteousness are one. Conscience touches God; God touches conscience. Whatever obedience I owe to the law which is revealed to conscience, I owe to God.

This moral supremacy, this identity with the eternal law of righteousness, is the ultimate prerogative, the incommunicable glory of Deity. That God is my Creator imposes on me many obligations; but if, though He is my Creator, He were not my God, His authority over me would not be unlimited. His goodness—incessant and infinite—imposes on me many obligations; but if, though He is infinitely good, He were not my God, I should be bound to be grateful to Him, but not to obey Him: my own conscience would still reveal the highest law, and this would determine the measure of my duty to Him. His power, in itself, gives Him absolutely no moral rights over me. It is not because He can punish me for not doing His will—it is not because He has actually menaced me with punishment for not doing His will—that I am bound to obey Him. The menace of punishment does not create a crime; if an action is not already wrong it is a crime to punish it.

He is God; and this means that He has an authority over me, absolutely unique and absolutely unlimited. Do you ask, "Why must a man obey God?" You can never have heard the voice of God if you ask that question. You may as well ask, "Why must a man obey conscience?" I must obey conscience because I *ought;* there is nothing more to be said. I must obey God because I *ought;* there is nothing more to be said.

And in Christ God comes to me and claims my obedience. The ultimate prerogative, the incommunicable glory of God, is Christ's. He is the Eternal Law of Righteousness incarnate. He does not counsel; He commands. When I discover who He is, I have no choice but to obey Him.

IV.

This position is challenged. It is contended that conscience must always retain its sovereignty, and that even in Christ's presence conscience remains supreme. In support of this contention it is alleged that Christ Himself appeals to conscience to recognise His claims. Miracles the most stupendous can never compel religious faith or moral submission; for miracles, in themselves, are simply displays of power: conscience must recognise the moral supremacy of Christ before Christ can command either our religious reverence or our moral submission. If conscience has to form a judgment on the moral claims of Christ as a whole, conscience must be competent to form a judgment on the details of His teaching, on His separate moral precepts; and only as conscience recognises their moral obligation do they become obligatory. Conscience after all is supreme.

It is true that conscience must determine whether or not the claims of Christ to moral authority are valid; but when conscience has once discovered that He is the living, personal revelation of the eternal law of righteousness, conscience has recognised its Master and Lord. Henceforth conscience itself insists that the commands of Christ must be obeyed.

"But am I, in any particular, to obey Christ against the dictates of my own conscience?" Wait and see whether the conflict arises. It may happen, indeed, that some of Christ's precepts impose duties which conscience has not discovered for itself, and does not recognise as intrinsically obligatory even when they are commanded. The explanation of this is to be found in what has been already said of the slow development of conscience. The jurisdiction of conscience is august; but conscience is not omniscient—even in its actual decisions it is not infallible. Left to itself, it often discovers duties only when it is too late to discharge them. But Christ enables us to anticipate experience. He does not command what conscience condemns; but in the early years of the Christian life it is very commonly found that He commands many duties which as yet conscience does not enforce.

V.

These claims of Christ to personal authority over the moral life provoke not only speculative criticism but resentment. There are men of high integrity and generous temperament to whom they are intolerable. It is one thing to submit to an abstract law which conscience discovers for itself—in this submission there is no humiliation; it is quite another thing to submit to the government of a Person.

Nor is it because the submission is claimed by one who has "been made flesh" that the claim is resisted. There are, it is to be feared, many persons who suppose that they believe in God, but who refuse Him all authority over conduct. They would vehemently resent the charge of atheism, but they regard God as nothing more than a metaphysical hypothesis to account for the existence of the universe. In support of this position they may appeal to the Christian apologists of the eighteenth century, some of whom seem to have learnt their theology from Aristotle rather than from Christ; but they are in open conflict both with the Jewish and the Christian revelation.

The Book of Genesis begins, no doubt, with a wonderful celebration of God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, of the sun, the moon, the stars, and of all living things; but it is impossible that this can record the first revelation of God to the human race. God first revealed Himself in His immediate relations to living men, and when men began to know Him for themselves He led them on to the discovery that He whom they knew was the Creator of all things. Both in the New Testament and in the Old, God's present and direct relations to men take precedence of all questions concerning the great First Cause.

But these relations are to many men intolerable. While God is nothing more than the Origin of all things the personal life is free; as soon as He claims authority the freedom seems lost. The claim is met with angry resistance. It is thrust aside, out of sight. To be ruled by a Law—this can be borne;

to be ruled by a Person is to be reduced to the condition of a slave.

But those to whom the great discovery of God in Christ has come, know that in His service there is perfect freedom. The recognition of His personal supremacy over life brings with it courage, elastic vigour, high hope, and a sense of great security and peace. The rule of Law—not of the personal God—is the real tyranny. The law can command; it can do nothing more. It is inflexible, and to those who are conscious of moral failure it is stern and implacable. It has no pity for our weakness, no tears for our defeats, no compassion for our follies, no forgiveness for our sins. It does not share our hopes. It does not rejoice in our triumphs. It leaves the awful loneliness of the soul in the highest provinces of life unrelieved. It can receive no confidences, show no sympathy. It lays upon us heavy burdens, and gives no strength to bear them. It raises questions which perplex us and answers none of them. When Christ becomes the Lord of conduct everything is changed. He stands by us in every conflict; gives strength as well as defines duty; rejoices more than we rejoice ourselves in our victories; grieves more than we grieve ourselves in our reverses. Henceforth we are never alone, either in the unexciting and monotonous duties of common days, or in those hours of peril in which, but for His presence and support, our hearts would fail and our strength faint.

Christ becomes our comrade, faithful and generous;

but yet He is our Ruler and we are under the government of a higher Will than our own. Close observers may discover the wonderful difference that this makes in the character of a man whose morality, in the ordinary sense of the word, has undergone no change as the result of his submission to Christ's authority. The difference is hard to put into words, but it is as if the man were always in the presence of one greater than himself; and this is the actual explanation of his new temper and spirit. There is no servility in him, but arrogance and wilfulness are now impossible. There is a new dignity in his moral bearing, but it is not a dignity that comes from self-assertion; it is a dignity that comes from his relationship to the greatness of another. No such results follow belief in a God who is nothing more than a metaphysical hypothesis to account for the origin of the universe. In men who have such a belief it may be perfectly clear that their will has never done homage to a higher will; and that whatever discipline they may have received from education and from the experience of life, the central forces of their nature are unsubdued and untamed. They have no relations to a nature higher than their own. They have no God.

We have to obey God in Christ. But when the real secret of the Christian revelation is mastered, the obedience assumes a unique character. The Will by which we are ruled is the will of another who is yet not another. The fountains of our life are in Him

We are one with Him as the branch is one with the vine. He is our higher self, our truer self. The Will we obey is a force which acts, not from without, but from within. It inspires as well as governs, impels as well as commands. This wonderful relation to Christ, and this alone, renders it possible to obey Him. Not until we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us are we able to keep His commandments.

XVIII.

AN ETHICAL REVIVAL.

DURING the last hundred years we have had two great religious movements in England, each of which may be fairly described as a religious revival. The earlier movement, originated by Whitfield and the Wesleys, rescued large masses of the English people from practical atheism. It reached the highest point of its power in the first quarter of the present century, and about 1830 began to decline.

In 1833 there were the first faint indications of a religious movement of a very different character. Scoffed at and despised in its earlier years, vehemently and passionately denounced a few years later, it continued to gather strength, until it began to change the whole temper and faith of the English Church. It has at last become, as some think, the most energetic element in the religious life of the nation.

Its influence has been felt beyond the limits of the Establishment, and even among those religious communities which are most hostile to its characteristic theology. It is to this movement that must be largely ascribed the recent activity of all Christian denominations in erecting and beautifying their church buildings. The money expended for these purposes during the last thirty years has been enormous. Ancient churches, which were falling into decay, have been restored. "Meeting-houses," which had satisfied the tastes of several generations of devout worshippers, and which were perfectly sound from foundation to roof, have disappeared, and have been replaced with buildings having nave and chancel, Gothic arches, tower or spire, and windows blazing with angels and saints. New churches on new sites have been erected, and their architecture is a witness to the triumph of the ecclesiastical movement which took its rise at Oxford and has spread all over the land. Never, I imagine, has so large an amount of money been devoted, within the same time and within the same area, to church building. And it has been devoted freely — not forced from men by the authority of princes or by the menaces of priests.

Although there is still a vast proportion of our people that neglect public worship, it cannot be said that the churches are desolate and neglected. In cathedrals, which were once a desolation from one year's end to another, there are now crowded congregations. Wherever the Gospel is preached with fervour and earnestness men throng to hear. And the services of every religious denomination are celebrated with greater solemnity and dignity than formerly; the arrangements for worship are no longer slovenly and careless.

Nor is this all. During the same period attempts have been made, on a great scale, to evangelise the country. Scripture-readers and city missionaries go from house to house. In the destitute parts of large towns mission-rooms are provided for the poor. New energy has been devoted to Sunday-schools. From time to time men of exceptional power as evangelists, both Churchmen and Nonconformists, have preached, week after week and month after month, to numerous congregations, and, apparently, with remarkable effect.

What has come of it all? The results of the evangelical revival of the last century have been frequently discussed, and though I doubt whether we have, even yet, formed a true and complete estimate of the various elements of its weakness and power, it is in the more recent movement that we have the deeper practical interest.

Is there any analogy between the recent movement and the great revival which took place under Hezekiah, and of which we have the history in 2 Chronicles xxix.–xxxi.? Can we find in the story of the Jewish people any warnings which may save us from the possible failure of the revival which, during the last fifty years, has stimulated the zeal and the activity of English Christians? At first sight, the two religious movements seem to have many points of resemblance.

Under the reign of Ahaz the Temple had been profaned, and its gates closed. Altars to Syrian gods were erected in every city of Judah, and even in the streets of Jerusalem. All this was changed at the accession of Hezekiah. As soon as he became king, he began a great reformation. The Temple was cleansed and the service restored. The people were invited to return to the God of their fathers, and the invitation created universal delight. The whole nation shared the earnestness of the king. At a great religious festival, which was held soon after he came to the throne, the priests were too few to slay the offerings which were brought voluntarily to the altars of Jehovah. "There was great joy in Jerusalem" that the old times had come back again; "for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem." Hezekiah "wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

Nor does this seem to have been a mere spasmodic movement. The revival went on for many years. When the prophecy preserved in the first chapter of Isaiah was delivered, its force was unspent. In that prophecy there is no complaint that the Temple was deserted, that the solemn festivals were neglected, that sacrifices were offered reluctantly, that the people had ceased to pray.

So far, the parallel between the ancient and the modern revival seems to be fairly close. Does the parallel run farther?

When Isaiah delivered this prophecy, the religious activity of the nation was, I have said, unrelaxed. But, in God's name, he speaks of it with fierce indignation and scorn. The sacrifices which the people offered with such fidelity—offered to the true God, offered in obedience to the Divine law—provoked the Divine disgust. The people that crowded the Temple are asked, "Who hath required this at your hands, that ye should trample My courts?" Your monthly assemblies for worship, your Sabbath services, "My soul hateth; they are a trouble to Me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye stretch forth your hands I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear."

These words are alarming. They ought to be specially alarming to English Christians just now. It appears that we may be very active in church building; may give our time and our strength and our money ungrudgingly to the maintenance of the institutions of Divine worship; may have a deep and hearty delight in the public service of God; may even be successful in our zealous endeavour to prevail upon the great masses of the people to attend church; and that God may come to regard all that we have done, not only with dissatisfaction, but with abhorrence. What was begun well may end badly. What is good as far as it goes, may be a grievous offence to God because it does not go farther. What had the Divine approval in its earlier days may at last provoke the Divine anger. A religious revival which appears to be a great success, may, after all, be in God's sight a disastrous failure.

The Jewish revival under Hezekiah was wrecked because it was not accompanied by a great reformation in morals. With all the religious zeal which the king had created, the private and public life of the people still continued terribly corrupt. How is it with ourselves? Has the religious movement of the last fifty years produced any considerable ethical reform? The theological aspects of the movement, which are ominous enough, may for the moment be disregarded.

As far as I am able to form any judgment on the question, there has been a positive improvement in Christian morality during this period; there has, at least, been an improvement in some directions. But I fear that the improvement has been only partial.

A selfish absorption in their own personal salvation cannot be charged indiscriminately on the Christian men and women of our times. They devote themselves in large numbers to movements for the alleviation of the distress and the instruction of the ignorance by which they are surrounded. The Christian Church recognises more clearly than in the last generation its responsibilities to the poor and the wretched. There are larger numbers of good men than there were fifty years ago who are faithful to municipal and political duty. In some other directions there are the signs of a moral reformation. There is greater sobriety in the Church than there was in the last century and in the beginning of the present century, and drunkenness is visited with sterner condemnation.

That the Sunday-schools and the "Missions" of all Churches have done very much to rescue large numbers of persons from a grossly vicious life is certain. What has happened within my own observation in connection with the work of Mr. Moody, and in connection with other evangelistic work of which I have a personal knowledge, has happened all over the country. Violent men and women have become gentle and quiet, the profane have become reverent and devout, and drunkards have become sober. Wherever the Church has reached those who were living in flagrant vice, it has reformed them.

But it is possible that while there has been a genuine reform among those who were guilty of gross sins, and while on the part of Christian people generally there may have been a new earnestness in the discharge of some duties, the ethical revival has not kept pace with the religious, and the greater zeal for the building of churches and the celebration of religious services may not have been accompanied with any considerable and general improvement in Christian character. When there is great religious excitement there ought to be (1) an elevation of the moral *ideal* of the Church; and there ought to be (2) a nearer approach to that ideal in the lives of Christian men. Apart from these two results of a religious revival, the excitement may soon disappear and may, in the long run, prove to be mischievous rather than beneficial. The most earnest and zealous evangelistic work—the most successful evangelistic work—ought to be accompanied and followed by a patient endeavour to discover more perfectly, and to obey more faithfully the will of God in relation to our common life. If we insist exclusively on God's infinite mercy, and suppress the recognition of His august authority, *our* "solemn assemblies" will be an offence to Him that loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity; *our* worship will be an "abomination" to Him; when *we* "spread forth our hands" in meetings for imploring the manifestation of the power and mercy of the Holy Spirit, He will "hide" His eyes from us, and when we "make many prayers" He "will not hear;" Christ will refuse to be a Saviour if He is not acknowledged as a Prince.

We are watching with anxiety the drift of considerable numbers of men towards religious unbelief —with anxiety, though with less alarm than we once felt; for, if I am not greatly mistaken, the faith of the Church is firmer and its courage higher than they were a few years ago. But though the alarm is less, the anxiety remains. We see clearly that we are involved in a grave struggle with unbelief—a struggle less perilous than some of the conflicts through which the Church passed triumphantly in past times, but sufficiently serious to task all our strength. We are also deeply concerned by the religious indifference of great masses of people who are unaffected by speculative objections to the Christian faith. We are entreating God to give greater energy and larger success to all the various forms of our Christian work. Our only hope is in Him. If He refuse to listen to our prayers, our position is desperate.

At such a time it is very necessary for us to remember that we have no right to expect that God will keep His promises unless we keep His commandments. The words of the prophet, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well," were addressed, not to the irreligious, but to those who were zealous in attending the services of the Temple and in offering their sacrifices on the altar of God. And the words which follow, "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," are not an assurance that God will forgive the sins of men who have lived an irreligious life if they become devout, but an assurance that He will forgive the sins of those who have been earnest in religious services, if they set themselves honestly to the moral reformation of their own conduct. If they "put away the evil of their doings," if they "cease to do evil, learn to do well," God will have mercy upon them.

The moral reformation which is necessary if we are to make sure of the Divine mercy for ourselves, is equally necessary if we are to produce any general and deep and lasting impression on the community. No matter how noble may be the churches that we build, no matter how solemn may be the religious services which we celebrate, no matter how earnestly we may preach the Gospel, no matter with what fervour we may pray to God to grant us a great religious revival, we shall fail utterly, if, in our ordinary life we show no practical proof that in the kingdom of heaven, to which we profess to belong, there is a loftier type of character than in the world outside.

Men may fairly say to us: "You are requiring us to acknowledge the authority of God—of the living God. You tell us that He abhors evil and loves righteousness, and that His 'commandment is exceeding broad,' and covers the whole extent of human life. But where is the proof that you yourselves are ruled by His authority? What are the laws which *you* keep and which we do not? What nobler virtue does God require than is required by the common opinion of Society? You say you have a revelation of His will concerning human life; but where is the trace in your business that God's laws are better than the laws which we discover for ourselves? Where is the trace of it in your homes?

where is the trace of it in your discharge of public duty?

"You working-men who profess to be Christians,—do you work harder when the foreman is out of sight than the men who do not profess to live in the eye of God? Are you more careful of your master's property? Are you less selfishly set on serving your own interests?

"You masters who profess to be Christians,—are you less reckless than other men in speculation? Are you more careful to give to your customers goods of the precise quality which you lead them to expect? Are you more careful not to take advantage of their ignorance? Do you care less about making a fortune rapidly, and more about carrying on your business honestly? Do you really bring all your business transactions under the eye of God? Do you submit your ledger to Him, and your price-list, and your bill-book, and your advertisements? If you do, has God's judgment on your transactions any effect? In your relations to your workmen are you more just and more merciful than other men, remembering that you have a Master in heaven?

"Of what use is it to tell us that *we* ought to acknowledge the authority of this God whom you profess to obey, when it does not appear that His authority makes any difference to you? Show us by practical proof that there is a Divine kingdom in the world, governed by Divine laws, and that through Christ you have found your way into it, and we shall begin to believe that this kingdom is real; but if you are just like other men, we shall conclude that it is a dream."

They may say to us again: "Why do you ask us to believe in a judgment to come? Do you believe in it yourselves? Is there any proof that you are restrained by it from sins which you would commit if you did not believe in it? Has it any greater influence on *you* than the dread of public shame has on *us*, or than the authority of our own consciences? If the judgment to come will be all that you say it will, you, who believe in it, ought to be constantly under its control.

"And the future life of glory of which you Christians speak—what manner of persons ought you to be, what manner of persons *would* you be, if you thought that life was real? Would it be possible for you to be so ambitious of winning the poorest earthly honours, if you believed that you had within your reach crowns that will never lose their lustre, thrones whose foundations will never be shaken? If you believed in the heaven which you sing about, would you care so much for wealth, and pleasure, and social consideration? Would you be as disturbed as the rest of us by earthly troubles? Do *you* believe in the glory of heaven? If you do, where is the proof of it?

"And the supreme fact—the death of Christ as the atonement for the sins of the world—if your faith in this were real, you would be unselfish, filled with universal charity, eager for every generous act of self-sacrifice. A love so great, manifested in a way so august and awful—if you *believed* in it—would reproduce in you, and in all who profess to have received forgiveness through the death of Christ, its own noble and wonderful perfection."

This kind of reasoning, though it may not be expressed, is being silently carried on in the minds of many who reject the Christian revelation, or who look upon it with indifference. There may be much injustice in it and much uncharitableness. We may know that the great facts in which we profess to believe exert a real and powerful influence on our practical life, and that we are different men from what we should be if we did not believe in them. But it remains true that the Church of Christ in our time is menaced by the same kind of peril under which the supremacy of the Church of Rome fell in the sixteenth century. The Church of Rome, as it has been well said, lost her doctrinal authority because she had first of all lost her pre-eminence in righteousness.

The religious revival we ought to long for, pray for, and work for, is a revival that shall affect the morals of the Church as well as its worship and religious sentiment, and ennoble the whole life of those who bear the Christian name. The power of the Church depends quite as much on the steadfast justice, the courageous truthfulness, the tender mercy of Christian people, as on the soundness of their creed and the fervour of their religious zeal.

I long to see the day when the faith of the Church shall be so strong that the promises of God will be the adequate consolation of all Christian people in their earthly sorrows, and when the great hope of immortal glory will fill their hearts with perpetual gladness and their lips with a perpetual song; when the Church will be inspired with a more fervent love and thankfulness in the presence of the cross of Christ and with a more passionate loyalty to His throne; when worship will cease to be a weariness, and when in prayer all Christian men will approach God with perfect confidence in His power and willingness to answer them. But I also long to see the time when the Church will discover in the teaching and example of Christ the outlines of a far diviner morality; when the noblest natural ethics will look poor and dim compared with the ideal of perfection for which the Church will strive, and which, in the strength of the Spirit of God, it will largely fulfil; when the equity, truthfulness, frankness, courage, industry, patience, temperance, self-sacrifice, public spirit, gentleness, charity of those who bear the Christian name, will be a perpetual demonstration of the presence and the power of the Holy Ghost.

A moral revival is as necessary as a revival of faith and of the religious affections. It is not our own salvation merely which is at stake, though our personal peril ought to create alarm if, while professing to trust in the love of God, we are habitually violating His law; for our religious faith and fervour do not in any sense palliate our moral guilt. but aggravate it, and, instead of averting ultimate condemnation, will only make it more terrible. But the authority of the Christian faith is also at stake. If Christian men are not actually controlled in their common life by all that they profess to believe; if their worship has no effect upon their common work they are contributing more powerfully to the temporary triumph of scepticism than the writers who are most hostile to religious truth. The wonderful story of the Incarnation,—it is we who are making it incredible if we are not manifestly trying to live a nobler life than those who deny it. The authority of God,—it is we who are teaching men that there is nothing in it, if we are not afraid to sin against Him. The great promises of immortality, —it is we who are persuading men that they are but the dreams of an excited imagination, if they do not make us almost indifferent to the transient successes of this mortal life, if they do not enable us to bear the hardships of poverty with a cheerful courage, and if they do not cool the fierce passion for wealth. The warnings of God, which threaten unrighteousness with tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish, —it is we who encourage the world to regard them without alarm, if, while they are on our lips, they do not restrain us from sin. A Church full of the life of God, loyal to the throne of God, eager to do the will of God, is certain to be a victorious Church. But a Church in which the Divine commandments are broken—no matter though its buildings are thronged with excited worshippers; no matter though there may be magnificent generosity in the support of religious institutions; no matter though its prayers may seem to be fervent; no matter though its preachers may be eloquent and impassioned; no matter though its creed may be defended by the learning of scholars and the wit and genius of a whole army of apologists—will do nothing to propagate a real faith in the Gospel of Christ and to rescue men from eternal destruction. Men will refuse to listen to its message, and God will refuse to listen to its prayer.

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